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[PRICE ONE PENNY.]



["I HATE YOU!" SAID DULCIE, VIOLENTLY, AND WELL, SHRINKING FROM HER, LEFT THE ROOM, HURRIEDLY.]

## DEARER THAN GOLD.

### CHAPTER XIII.

SIR JOCELYN and his sister-in-law had no knowledge of Lady Dale's history, or of her inner self. Their instinctive aversion to her, as well as their belief she was an unsuitable companion for Dulcie, were both the result of prejudice.

Had they guessed the real nature of the beautiful foreigner, or the extent of the influence she exercised over their charge, they would have broken off all intercourse with her at any risk.

For Zs had inherited more than a dark complexion from her coloured ancestry. She was versed in charms and spells, learned in all the arts practised by her own people.

Very few of us are free from a little curiosity as to the future. The gipsy who "tells fortunes," the astrologer who consults the stars, the spiritualist, the mesmerist, the learned lady who studies palmistry, the old

Scotch woman who preaches second sight, are one and all proofs of that strange yearning in our nature to pry into the unknown—the mysterious fascination the future holds for us all.

Dulcie Lyle might well have been content with her present as the idolised heiress of a grand old home, but she was ambitious.

She wearied of the quiet monotony of Ravensmere. She wanted to move in the gay world, and be an acknowledged leader of fashion.

Her father and aunt were little likely to gratify her tastes, and so the little lady had made up her mind to accept a plain gold ring as soon as a fitting person chose to offer it; and she had quite decided that the young Lord Dale was the most desirable man to do so.

She watched Lady Dale in a curious, awed state while the page gazed into the strange glass bowl. He and his mistress sang in a sweet foreign tongue a duet, and Dulcie felt as though she were being carried far away—as though her future fate was utterly in their hands.

When the last note had died away a deep

sigh escaped her—for the moment she wished herself at home. But she had gone too far, Lady Dale touched her arm caressingly.

"Speak, my dearest! What is it you would know?"

"When shall I be married?" asked Miss Lyle, with the suspicion of a blush. "And when shall I leave Ravensmere?"

The page gazed intently into the inky pool, and then, looking up, said something in his strange, foreign jargon to his mistress.

"You have not long to wait," said Zs, graciously. "He says you will leave Sir Jocelyn before the year is ended. You will be taken away from Ravensmere in a carriage drawn by four horses, and you will never return."

"Never!" Dulcie's voice shook a little. "Oh, I think he is wrong. I shall come back sometimes. Zs, make him tell me more. I want to know who it is I marry, and whether papa makes a fuss, and if I am to be very rich and powerful, and have my own way."

There was a pause. Then the boy spoke—this time in English.

"The thorns are gathering in your path,

lady. You are rich and great now, but your grandeur will not last. It will all pass from you to another who stands at your side?"

"He must mean you, Zoë!"

"No!" returned the boy. "The bar to the lady and what she seeks is an English girl—one with dark blue eyes and a gentle face. She does nothing, raises no hand to wrong the lady; but, all the same, everything will be hers."

Dulcie's eyes flashed ominously.

"He must mean the girl I sent to you. She lost her way coming home, and Lord Dale drove her back to Ravensmere."

"She is young and fair," went on the boy, dreamily; "but she stands on the brink of a precipice. Honours, wealth, and love are lying at her feet; but she must not stoop and pick them up. There are two enemies dogging her steps, who will not let her be happy."

"Who are they?" demanded Dulcie, anxiously, wondering if she should hear a description of herself.

"I cannot say. They are far enough away; but their hold on her will be conquered and broken down. She will be happy yet, but her happiness will not begin until she has been in peril."

"Will she marry Lord Dale?" almost hissed Dulcie.

The boy shook his head.

"I see no wedding-ring," he said, in a puzzled tone, "no grand marriage ceremony. I tell you she has trouble—great trouble. There are two cruel foes dogging her steps, and a golden wall parts her from her friends; but all the same she conquers. She fills the place that is yours now, lady. She comes back to Ravensmere when you have left it for ever."

Zoë and her guest passed out of the darkened room into a more cheerful apartment. Lady Dale was thoughtful, Dulcie openly incredulous.

"I don't believe a word of it," she said.

"I have never known him mistaken."

"But it's nonsense, Zoë. Think how little he said! Really, why he hardly answered my questions!"

"He told you you would leave Ravensmere this year and never return. He declared your fortune and prospects would pass to a girl at your side with fair hair and blue eyes—no bad description of your companion, Miss Winter!"

"But you know they could not. Papa could not leave his property away from me. It's entailed!"

"Dulcie, do you like Miss Winter?"

"I detest her! She seems to be always thrown in my teeth as what I ought to be; and if she marries Lord Dale I will never forgive her."

"I hate her too!"

"You!"

"Mr. Granville cares for her," returned Lady Dale, with a quiet air of confidence. "Mark you, Dulcie, if she is let alone this girl will rob us both!—you of your ambition, me of my love! She must be removed."

Dulcie shuddered just a little. She did not like the mysterious sound of the word "removed." She would have liked to send Miss Winter back to Dr. Monkton, but she had no further design against her. There was a glitter in Lady Dale's black eyes, which filled her with terror.

"I think it would be difficult," she confessed, frankly. "Papa and my aunt are quite infatuated with her."

"It must be done."

"But how?"

"Leave that to me!"

Dulcie had risen to go. A sudden shiver passed over her frame.

"Zoë did the boy mean death? He said, you know, that I should be borne away in a carriage with four horses, and that I should never come back. A hearse has four horses, and one never comes back from the grave."

Lady Dale laughed outright.

"You are nervous. I gave you credits for more sense, or I would never have let you con-

sult my oracle. Now Dulcie, do get some colour into your cheeks, or your aunt will forbid you ever coming here again!"

Miss Lyle promised, but her friend's merriment did not reassure her. She was looking very white and tired when she reached home; and Nell, touched by her weary, dejected appearance, bore patiently with her insolent manner and short, caustic remarks.

"I don't think you can be well, Miss Lyle," she ventured to remark, as she sat *à-tête* with the heiress.

"I am perfectly well," returned Dulcie, "however much you may wish to the contrary."

Nell opened her eyes.

"Why should I desire you to be ill?" she asked, gently. "Don't you think you are rather unjust to me?"

"No, I don't," said Dulcie. "I believe you came here on purpose to try and set my father and aunt against me, and I shall never rest until I have persuaded them to send you away. I tell you I hate you, with your quiet ways and deceitful face! I hate you! I hate you!"

Nell had suspected as much before; but to have her fears confirmed was painful. She felt she should break down altogether if she stayed with Dulcie in her present mood, so, with some hasty apology, she left the room.

Meeting the old butler in the hall he gave her a letter that had just come by the second post, she said.

Nell took it almost mechanically, and went upstairs to her own sanatorium. She did not feel much interest in it. The writing was unknown to her, and there was no one from whom she expected to hear. No presentiment of ill seized her as she opened it. She thought it probable it came from a London tradesman to whom she had sent about some books Sir Jocelyn required. There was no suspicion of trouble, no tinge of fear at her heart as she began to read it.

"You have hidden yourself very cleverly, pretty one, but you need not think to escape me. I find you have become a person of great importance lately. I might manage to exist without my wife; but I must confess I can't manage to spare the mistresses of Field Royal any longer. Since you played your cards so well your husband may as well enjoy a share of the spoils."

"I shall be with you the day after you receive this, and I warn you it's of no use for you to attempt flight again, as my spies will keep guard over your movements. If you decline to take the good things providence gives you I shall not share your renunciation. As the husband of its mistress, I imagine I have a pretty good right to Field Royal, and I don't in the least mind whether I reign there in my own right, or as king consort."

"Your affectionate husband."

"G. N."

That was all. But, oh! what a change it made in Nell's feelings! A minute before she had had no harder trial than Dulcie's petulance; now every danger she had ever feared was advancing on her. She must act, and act promptly, and yet her head was in one whirl.

Dick Granville had made two versions of Nell's story, but neither of them was quite right. He never guessed that she was a wedded wife, and one of the two men he had seen at Hastings was her husband. Yet so it was.

It was a cruel story. The dissolute, spend-thrift father had a friend ten times more evil and more cunning than himself—a man who got his living by gambling, fleeing young fellows who did not suspect his real character.

It occurred to him, in an evil moment for her, that a child-wife, with beauty like Nell's, a guileless face, and rare grace of manner, might be a very great assistance to him in his disreputable career.

He was piqued by her marked dislike to him. He was taken by her beauty, by a nameless dignity which made her different

from all the girls he had ever met. He had never been conquered before, and he swore a dreadful oath that she should be his wife.

The two wretches worked it together. Fox played on his daughter's filial pity—not affection, for of that she had none. He made up a touching story of being in Mr. Norton's power, of the latter holding papers of his which might bring him into a felon's dock.

These papers Norton would give into Nell's keeping on her wedding day. For her dead mother's sake would she not save her father?

Nell yielded. She had then the money in her pocket necessary to take her to Cromer, and she meant to fly the very day of the ceremony.

When once the papers that could ruin her father were in her possession Mr. Norton could not harm him. If she never saw his face again what would it matter that the law called this man her husband?

She was such a child in some things, despite her miserable life, that she never guessed Norton would pursue her with all the tenacity of a baffled, furious man. Poor girl! she thought she should never care for anyone, never want to marry any man, so his claim on her would not matter if only that she escaped him.

They were married. He kissed her as they left the church, and the kisses filled her with a nameless horror, making her realise dimly she had made a mistake, that she would give worlds to undo the hurried ceremony.

Her purse was gone. She was penniless, yet she must escape from this man. Never, resolved the passionate, girlish heart, would she submit to his endearments.

She crept out from the hotel while he and her father sat making their plans. She found her way to the breakwater at Dovercourt, and but for Dick Granville she would have found a grave—on her wedding day.

Poor Nell!

Here had been a chequered life. Her father had changed his name so often that, poor girl, she was not quite sure which of the many appellations she had borne was really her own, except that she had been called Petronella after her mother.

She believed Smith to be as much her name as any of those she had been known by, and it was so common that she felt it safe. She hated fraud and deceit; this poor wail, whose life had been so mixed up with both; and so, when she became Mrs. Charteris's companion, she gave her name to the widow as Petronella Smith.

She had never seen her husband since her wedding day. Her father she had seen at Hastings, platform as the train bore her rapidly away.

She feared both men, but of the two she dreaded George Norton most. She had very little legal knowledge, poor child; but she believed the brief ceremony at Harwich transferred her father's authority over her to Mr. Norton.

Nothing in the world would have induced her to live with him as his wife. The very touch of his hand, the very sound of his voice, terrified her. She would spend her whole life as a fugitive. She would never have a home or friends if only by these means she could escape this man's pursuit.

She read the letter again and again until its mocking words seemed burnt into her brain. It was worse than she had thought. Her husband had discovered Mrs. Charteris's legacy. A man who lived by his wits, who esteemed money above aught else, was it likely he would give up seeking her now he found she was the owner of twenty thousand pounds a year?

It seemed to poor Nell there was no end to her misery wrought by that bequest. It had spoiled Dick Granville's life, and brought him a cruel disappointment. It had given her husband a fresh incentive to pursue her. And if Mr. Norton went to Field Royal with the story of his claims Dick would know all—would know that the girl he had saved from



death was the rival who had robbed him of his fortune! It was too hard.

"Oh, my darling!" thought the poor, weary girl, "this is the cruellest blow of all. I would lay down my life and die for you, yet I bring this sorrow upon you. How you will despise me when you see George Norton, and know that I am—his wife. You won't know the threats brought to bear on me. You won't guess I consented to marry him just to spare my father a prison. You'll only hear I am his wife, and you will look on me almost as one beneath your scorn."

She almost marvelled why her husband had troubled to write to her, since it was putting her on her guard. She found out later he thought she did not know of her brilliant prospects, and believed the hope of claiming her rights, with his assistance, would make her yield to him in all things. She learned this afterwards, but she felt thankful she had the warning, for it would give her time to escape.

But how?

He said his spies were watching. Could that be true? And even if so, could they stop her? She thought over her plans long and carefully.

Dick Granville was away. There was no one else in the neighbourhood she could trust, therefore her flight must be conceived and carried out by herself.

Where could she go? Dr. Monkton's house was closed to her. It would be the first place Sir Jocelyn would send to inquire at. She dared not go to Mr. Cameron. She had not much money, and the recollection of the straits she had been reduced to in the spring frightened her; but if she had been going to the certainty of starvation she would not have hesitated.

At last she remembered an old nurse of Dulcie's, who had come on a visit to her old master not long before. Mrs. Brett had taken a great fancy to the companion, and Nell had given the old servant the kindly little attention she might have expected, but certainly did not receive, from the heiress.

Mrs. Brett lived in a little village not far from Deal. She was comfortably off, having a pension from Sir Jocelyn to eke out her savings. There was little doubt she would receive Nell, and shelter her in her cottage until she could hear of some employment. No one would dream of looking for her there. The journey itself was a cross-country one, involving two changes of train, so that it seemed all due to her must be lost.

She read and played to Sir Jocelyn as usual that afternoon, and when he remarked her white face, she said simply she had a headache. She sat through dinner conscientiously trying to amuse Mrs. Lyle, but all the while she was longing to put her head on her kind friend's shoulder and burst out crying.

It was so terribly so hard! Sir Jocelyn and his sister had treated her almost as their own flesh and blood, and yet she must leave them without a word of farewell. She loved the Baronet better far than did his own child, and yet she must forsake him—must go away as a fugitive, and, leaving no address, would hear nothing of his health.

She had been so happy at Ravensmere—so very happy. What were Dulcie's caprices and Mrs. Lyle's little prim way, after all! It seemed to Nell she could have bore with them all her life, if only she might have gone on living here within reach of Dick Granville.

"I am sure you are not well, my dear!" said Mrs. Lyle, when they got back to the drawing room. "You must have taken a chill, you shiver to!"

"I am very tired," faltered Nell. "I think, if you will excuse me, I should like to go to bed."

Mrs. Lyle never forgot the lingering, clinging touch of the girl's soft fingers as she bade her good-night, nor the strange, sad ring in her voice, as she thanked her for some trifling kindness. She little guessed then all that was to happen before she saw Nell's sweet face again.

## CHAPTER XIV.

It was the very same August which Nell spent so happily at Ravensmere—the very same month when the cruel fraud was played on old Mrs. Granville and her daughter, that a woman, weary and worn by trouble rather than by years, sat stitching busily away for dear life in an obscure London lodging.

She had been beautiful and brilliant once. The only child of a wealthy man, the reputed heiress of great riches, it had not needed her sweet face, her youth, and many charms of mind and heart to win her friends.

Well, the expectations, the brilliancy, the youth, ay, even the friends themselves, had fled away. The beauty was dim and faded, but the charm of manner still remained.

Helen Charteris, the heiress, had had a nameless fascination.

Mrs. Nairn, the humble, underpaid sempstress had, her neighbours said, "a way with her." She would never be quite desolate, never be quite forsaken, because of this strange gift, which won for her, even in her poverty, the goodwill of those poorer than herself.

She was not nine-and-twenty, yet she looked long past thirty—her dress dingy to the last degree of shabbiness, and yet mended with tidy care and put on with neat fingers—her little room very bare of furniture, and yet clean as hands could make it; the plain deal table strewn with the coarse shirts she was making.

A poverty-stricken room, indeed, and yet one an artist would have loved to linger in, for there was one ornament in it no poverty had faded.

The sunbeams which came in at the little window fell on a child's golden head, and lit up a face any mother would have been proud of.

That was Mrs. Nairn's one blessing—her sole tie to the world, which she had found a very cruel resting-place.

How could she wish to die and leave Violet alone in the world? How could she be quite miserable or entirely wretched while that sweet comforter was left to her?

She had very soon been disenchanted as to the husband she had chosen for herself. Before many months had crept over her head she knew him as he was, and realised every word her father said against him was true.

She soon discovered he had married her counting on her father's relenting, believing her influence over Mr. Charteris was such he would receive any husband for her sake, or at least defray the cost of the *ménage*.

At her husband's instigation she wrote to her father, not once but many times. Each letter came back unopened, then the last disguise was thrown aside.

Mr. Nairn showed himself in his true colours, and poor Helen's ideal was stripped of the last illusion with which she had clothed it.

She would have left him gladly; but, alas! where could she go that he could not find her! Her father's house was closed against her. Summer friends had vanished.

There was not one creature in the world on whom she could count for help.

She had been well educated and was accomplished, but what pupils would come to her miserable lodgings; and how could she go out teaching and leave her baby boy alone and uncared for?

That baby faded, and died, and when Violet was born Mrs. Nairn had grown so used to misery she never even hoped the child would live.

What was the good of a baby lingering a few weeks, and then, when every fibre of her heart had clung around the little life, leaving her alone.

But, contrary to the poor creature's expectation—contrary almost to her hopes—this last flower bloomed and flourished.

George Nairn deserted his wife before Violet

could walk. He told her plainly they did not "get on." She had too many scruples and fancies to suit him; they had better both go their own ways and not interfere with each other.

Mrs. Nairn dared not betray the joy she felt. To be free from her tyrant was an unmixt boon.

She removed to a quiet room off Tottenham Court-road, and slaved at shirt-making some fifteen hours a day, whereby she was enabled to keep body and soul together, and bring up the child decently, if poorly.

Her husband from time to time descended on her, evidently to share the spoils if her rich relations had sent her any, but he always found her just the same, working hard for a very poor subsistence, and so evidently without a penny beyond what she earned, that his hopes of getting anything from her faded, and his visits grew fewer and shorter until now for more than a year they had ceased entirely.

It was an unusually hot day even for August, the sun streamed in through the unshaded window, making the little room feel like a bakehouse.

Helen felt ready to faint. She pushed back her hair from her heated forehead, and paused in her ceaseless stitching, as though she could not do without a moment's break.

Violet was asleep on the bed. The mother's eyes wandered to her from time to time, as though the sight of the dimpled face rewarded her for all she suffered.

She herself was thin almost to bones. Her face was drawn and haggard. A shadow rested on it always, but the shadow was deeper now.

The date of the day had just recurred to her, and it brought back a train of painful thoughts. On this very day, nine years before, she had taken her fate into her own hands, and left her father's house for the sake of the man who had made her life so miserable.

Nine years ago!

Was it possible that so short a space had gone by since the days when she was a happy girl—her father's pride, the darling of a large circle of friends? What had become of all the people she used to know? Was her stepmother alive, or had her cousin Dick come into the splendid heritage they were to have shared together?

"I should like to see Dick," she thought, wistfully. "He was always kind to me in the old days, and I don't believe he would be hard on me. But Dick is a rich man now, I expect, with a fine lady wife who would spurn me from his door, and yet I'd like to see him, just to hear a voice from the old time that seems so very long ago."

The tears stood in her eyes and dropped down on her work. She dashed them impatiently away, and took up the coarse shirt again.

She could not afford time for grief, poor soul; could not indulge in thinking of the past, for minutes meant money, and she needed every penny she could earn for Violet's sake.

Then came a knock at the door, and Helen bade the intruder enter, never raising her eyes from her work, and supposing her visitor to be a neighbour who sometimes brought her sewing in to bear her company.

"Well, I think you might have a warmer welcome for your husband after all these months!" was Mr. Nairn's indignant speech. "I believe you have no more feeling than a stick or a stone, Helen."

Poor woman! She trembled from head to foot as she realised he had found her out. She knew nothing of the new laws made for the protection of women, and that she could claim legal help to get rid of him, since for five years he had contributed nothing to her support. She only felt that he was there, that he would not have sought her except for his own pleasure—and his own pleasure was mostly a cruel one.

"A pretty dance you have led me!" he said

angrily. "Why in the world did you not send and tell me you had moved?"

"I did not think it would interest you!" she said, coldly; "besides, I had no address!"

"Rubbish!"

"I only moved from one end of the street to the other. I knew you could find me out if you troubled to."

He sat down opposite her and stared at her. No one would have taken them for husband and wife. The woman pale and thin, manifestly over-worked and badly fed, yet with an innate refinement hovering over her still, and gilding her poverty.

The man prosperous and well-dressed, plump and self-satisfied, handsome as he had been when she loved him to her own ruin, and yet with the mark upon him which had always been there, had she only had eyes to see him—the stamp upon his face brought there by dissipation and evil habits. A man's features are his truest diary, little as he may realise it. His daily life puts its imprint on his face.

George Nairn had been keeping this sort of journal for a good many years now, and the result was that no one—not even the most credulous of strangers—would have looked at him and taken him for a good man.

"How you keep on at that eternal stitching. I think you might put it down when your husband comes to see you!"

"We should fare badly enough—the child and I—if I did not keep on at it," she answered, wearily. "I can listen to you just the same."

Nairn began fumbling with his hands in his pockets. At last he brought out some sovereigns, counted five, and passed them carelessly to his wife.

"Never say when luck came I did not share it with you! Take those, Nell, and put that hateful work away. I want to talk to you. Oh, you need not look at the gold so doubtfully. It came straight from the Bank of England, and is as good as any you ever handled in your life!"

She put the money away in her poor little purse.

How long it was since it had held so much at once! Then she folded up her sewing, and once more sat down opposite her husband.

"How's the child?" he asked, carelessly.

"She is quite well. Speak softly, or you'll wake her."

"I don't want to do that; babies aren't in my line. She used to be a pretty little thing enough. She must be turned six now."

"Seven next birthday," answered Helen, little suspecting the snare she had fallen into.

"Just so; seven next birthday. We won't forget that. Now, Helen, what do you suppose I have come here for?"

Her very instinct told her he had come there to work her trouble. Despite his gift, she longed, with a weary pain, for him to be gone away; but the years she had spent with him had taught her at least this much—it was always best and safest to conceal her own feelings.

She shook her head.

"I never expected to see you again," she said, simply; "the last time you were here you talked of going to America. Hearing nothing of you, I thought you had really gone."

"Well, I didn't go; but I sail in a very short time."

"And you have come to say good-bye?" The woman's voice softened. After all, he was the husband of her youth, the father both of her dead babies and her living treasure. "I am glad you came, George; I had rather we parted friends."

"Just so; but as it happens I don't intend to part at all. I mean to take you and the child with me to Canada."

She threw up her hands with a bitter cry. A woman may have very few ties to her native land, but yet she will shrink from leaving it—if she is to go with a husband she distrusts.

Nell was poor enough in England, but she

knew, at least, the extent of her powers; knew how much she could earn, how little she could live on, and by an exceeding struggle had managed to make the one amount stretch out to the other. In America, if George deserted her, what should she do? She and Violet might starve.

"It would be much better for you to go without us," she said, slowly. "I suppose it is a very expensive journey, and you will be sure to want money to make a start when you get there. Oh, yes; it would be much better for you to go alone."

He sneered. He was a clever, astute man of the world, and he divined all his wife's unuttered reasons against the plan.

"You're an affectionate wife, Nell, I must say; as attached a one as ever a man was blessed with! Why don't you say outright you prefer my room to my company, and that you'd rather starve here than be a rich woman in America if the wealth was only to be had by putting up with my society?"

"You said yourself it was better for us to part."

"For a time, until fortune turned. It has turned, with a vengeance now, and in a little while I shall be a richer man than you ever dreamed of."

Still she hesitated.

"I would much rather stay in England," she confessed. "Canada is a very severe climate, and it might not suit Violet. Let us stay here, George, and you enjoy your good fortune alone."

He looked at her steadily.

"I shall not enjoy it alone," he said, firmly. "Perhaps it is hardly worth while to force you to accompany me, but I shall take my daughter."

"Take Violet! You cannot part us; she is only a baby. What could she do without her mother?"

"I suppose a good nurse could be hired?" said Nairn, carelessly. "Anyway, I shall try. You owned yourself the child was seven next birthday. At seven years old, by the law of England, if the parents are unhappily separated, the custody of the children passes to the father."

"It is a lie!"

"It is the truth. There are cases, of course, where the right is forfeited, and hundreds where it is never claimed; but ours is not one in point. I am going to settle in America. I offer to take you, and give you a comfortable home there. You refuse to go, but I shall not give up my rights over the child. Why, if the judge heard of the choice—a garret like this, and a mansion in Quebec or Montreal—do you suppose he would hesitate? Of course he would let the law take its course, and give me the child."

Helen looked at the baby sleeper, and her lip trembled. She had borne poverty, privation, and hardships; but she felt there was one blow she could not endure—a parting from her child. Wherever Violet was taken, she would be drawn after by a love that was the strongest feeling of her being.

"Look here," said Nairn, in a more conciliatory tone, "what is the use of making a fuss? Just give me one single reason against your going to Canada with me?"

"I don't want to go—I am afraid!"

"I never thought you a coward! Pray, what are you afraid of? There are no wild beasts."

She spoke out plainly then.

"George, if your schemes don't succeed, if you get tired of us out there, what will become of us? It is hard enough to get along here; it would be well-nigh impossible among strangers."

"I should not have thought this was 'getting on,'" and again his scornful eyes wandered round the room, "but I leave you perfectly free to take your choice. My daughter goes with me to Canada. You can accompany us if you like."

"Won't you tell me a little about what you are going to do?" she asked, pleadingly.

"It is all so strange. How can we go to a fresh country with no clothes except these shabby ones."

"That is easily arranged. I will give you twenty pounds to rig yourselves out with. I shall take your first-class passage in a large steamer, and pay over to an agent at Montreal a sum of money sufficient to keep you and the child for a few months in case business requires me to leave you. I don't ask you to trust my word, Helen. It may take three weeks to write to Mr. Donaldson and get his reply; but before you go to Liverpool you shall see with your own eyes his receipt for the money I have sent him, and his guarantee to remit it to you in weekly payments. I don't want to take you and the child into beggary, though you may fancy so."

He was gone at last, leaving a pile of sovereigns for the shopping, and taking his wife's promise to be ready to sail as soon as he showed her the letter from the Canadian agent.

Helen Nairn had all the old distrust of her husband; but in a very few weeks her child would be seven years old, and she dreaded even the idea of a parting from Violet.

Mr. Nairn was heartless and vindictive. She knew if she crossed his will he would wreak his fury on her to the uttermost. His proposal seemed fair, even liberal; though even while she assented to it, poor creature, she felt a strange conviction he had some hidden object—something to gain by removing her and Violet from England, though what that something was she could not yet fathom.

There was almost a melancholy pleasure in once more having the command of money, of being able to buy things for herself and her child. The shirt-making was given up, and she spent her time on her own and Violet's outfit. Her nimble fingers accomplished wonders, and all was ready when just three weeks later George Nairn appeared again.

"It's a horrible nuisance, Nell; but I shall not be able to sail with you! Your passage is taken, and it will never do to forfeit the money. I shall go down with you to Liverpool, and put you in the captain's charge, so you'll be all right, and Donaldson will tell you the best boarding-place to go to till I can join you."

Helen trembled.

"I would rather wait for you."

"Come, you can't expect me to believe you have any great desire for my society at this time of day. You'll be all right. Heaps of women travel alone now a days, and you always were good at making friends. You'll get on famously, and when you've been out about a fortnight or so I shall be able to join you. I'll give you a ten-pound note for incidental expenses, and here's Donaldson's letter for you to read for yourself."

It was perfectly satisfactory. A formal receipt for a hundred pounds to be paid over to Mrs. Nairn in thirty weekly payments of three guineas each, the remainder to be kept as commission. The letter, of course, might have been forged, but the envelope with the Canadian stamp and postmark must be genuine.

Helen hesitated, and then decided. She would go. If there was any cruel scheme she would save up enough from the weekly payments to bring her and Violet back to England. She felt there was a secret she might not even guess which governed all her husband's plans, yet all sounded fair and honest. It cost her something to leave the humble room where she and her child had at least lived peacefully, but for Violet's sake she was forced to yield.

George Nairn was civil and even attentive on the journey to Liverpool, and when he took his wife and child on board the *City of Rome* he asked to see the Captain, and explaining his own unavoidable detention begged him to consider Mrs. Nairn and Violet as under his protection.

Captain Green, a pleasant, genial Englishman of forty, turned, accepted the charge readily, introduced them to two or three of the



lady passengers, assured Mrs. Nairn she would find the voyage a mere pleasure trip and the climate of Canada most delightful; and then, as the warning bell sounded, he stepped aside that he might not intrude on the parting of husband and wife.

Their hands met, not their lips—those were long time strangers. He made some conventional wish for her welfare, and she hoped he would soon follow them. Then it was over—he had passed up the gangway. Another moment, and the voyage had begun. The water already parted husband and wife.

"That's all right," said George Nairn to himself, as he turned away from the docks. "At any rate, my path's cleared of one difficulty; but I've got an uncommonly awkward part to play, and I shall be glad when I'm out of the quicksands, and it's plain sailing."

(To be continued.)

## EDEN'S SACRIFICE.

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### CHAPTER XXXVI.

HERBERT STAUNTON had drawn his hat well over his eyes, picked up his cane, and was starting for town to fill an appointment with his detective.

He had lost hope, and the old bitterness of the first days of his stunning grief oppressed him.

He opened the door mechanically, and found a messenger in the act of ringing the bell.

"Is Mr. Staunton in?" the boy asked.

"I am he," answered Bertie, with no animation.

The boy drew from his pocket a not over clean envelope and pick alip of paper, saying laconically,—

"Sign!"

Staunton jotted down his name carelessly.

"Any answer?" he asked.

"No, sir."

The boy started down the steps, and pausing to light a cigar, Bertie walked leisurely down the street, tearing open the envelope as he went. He unfolded a jaggedly torn piece of paper, and read:—

"MR. STAUNTON,—

"Dear Sir,—A most serious accident has happened. It involves some one closely connected with you. Come at once to — Street.

"Respectfully yours,

"JAMES LEWIS."

Over and over again he read the letter, then paused in his walk, and seemed to consider deeply.

A cab with a jaded horse and a half-drunken driver was passing. He hailed it, gave the number and street indicated in the letter, and soon found himself before a plain dwelling. He rang the bell.

"I had a letter"—he began, to the man who answered the summons.

"From Jim Lewis," the man interrupted.

"Yes, I am he. You are Mr. Staunton. Walk in, sir."

"You spoke of an accident—"

"Yes, I know. I have a surprise for you. Will you step in the parlour?"

Bertie removed his hat and walked, somewhat bewildered, into the small room, furnished with haircloth, and guiltless of ornament of any kind.

He did not sit down, but laying his hat upon a table stood watching the door anxiously.

### CHAPTER XXXVII.

HERBERT STAUNTON had not long to wait. The door opened at last, and a small figure appeared in a dainty wrapper, with a face

peeping from under its weight of recent tears, like a flower under dew.

He sprang forward with a wild, glad cry.

"Eden, Eden, is it you? Oh, my darling! my darling!"

He would have clasped her in his arms, but she pushed him from her gently, her sweet eyes gazing with dazed joy into his.

Bertie!" she cried. "I cannot believe

you. Wait! You did not want me before: why do you seem so glad now?"

"Not want you! Not want you, Eden! My own, my wife, there was never a time when I would not have given my life, my soul, for you. Do not keep me from you. Oh, Eden, how hungry my heart is!"

Then she forgot all but her supreme, overmastering love for him, and yielded herself to his embraces.

It was a moment that would have paid for ages of suffering.

"Not there," he exclaimed, when she would have seated herself beside him, "but here against my heart. Eden, is it really my wife I hold?"

"Your wife, thank Heaven for that!"

"And Gordon—"

"Hush! He lies up there while his soul faces the Eternal Judge. He erred, Bertie, but he also repented. Forget the wrong he did, and remember what he might have done and did not. Bertie, look at me. A marriage ceremony was said over Wilfred Gordon and me weeks ago, yet I have never been any man's wife save yours."

He clasped her closely, a gratitude too deep for words rendering him speechless.

"You will never know," he said, after a pause filled with emotion, "how I have suffered. How wildly happy I was when I found that you lived, for with you living there was the knowledge that all the caverns of earth were not large enough to hide you from my love."

"And yet, when I threw myself at your feet that night, you stood still and allowed Wilfred Gordon to take me unresisted."

"Eden"—reproachfully—"you believe that of Malcolm and me! Oh, darling, cruel little one, we have slept neither night nor day, planning, searching always. How can you have doubted our love?"

She shivered slightly, but the warmth of his eyes thrilled her heart.

"I did not know. I was mad, mad! Bertie, can you ever forgive me for that and for all the rest?"

"Don't talk to me of forgiveness. There can be none between you and me, for there can be no offence. I adore your very faults, my own. How good Heaven is!"

"Yes, very good. It removed the cause and left us for each other again. Is my brother not coming to me?"

"He does not know yet. We will go to him in a moment, then together you can tell us of the dangers through which you have passed. I can think of nothing but love now. You look so frail, my little one."

"I have been very ill. It is only his great love that saved me for you. Poor Wilfred! But he saved me from a more hideous fate today."

"What?"

"Not now. Let us forget it all in this hour if we can."

"I shall know no comfort until I have told you all the unhappy secrets of that past which divided us, my wife."

"I know it all in that I know myself to be your wife. Every joy and hope and happiness is expressed in those words. I wish to know no more. You are the prince of men, the king of kings, and I the most blessed of women."

"This is the heaven of heaven, my own, my love. No rapture can exceed or even equal it. Mine again, this time for ever."

Herbert and Malcolm listened together, each holding a small, almost transparent hand as she told the story of her wanderings, kissing them tenderly now and then as mute expressions of loving sympathy.

She said no word of Walter Marchmont's love. That was a subject too sacred to handle.

"It was a noble sacrifice to love," he exclaimed, when she had finished; "but I would have given every drop of blood in my body to have saved you it."

"Oh, no!" Eden answered, kissing him with subdued passion. "It has been hard, but there is a long, joyous future awaiting us—long enough and bright enough to make us forget the darkness that divided us. After all, I was well treated in comparison with some of whom I have read. Don't you remember, Malcolm, how the people used to say that I should have to suffer some day for my impulsiveness?"

"Yes, dear. I hope it is over and done with now."

"I don't know," with a short merry laugh.

"I am so happy now that I am beginning already to forget. I feel as if I should like to take the whole world in my embrace, and make every one in it as full of joy as I am."

Neither of the men spoke. Both were vainly endeavouring to swallow lumps that were rising in their throats.

"There is a moral to it all, Malcolm," she exclaimed, with affected solemnity. "You must never select a wife without my permission."

The blonde face of the young man became suddenly overcast with crimson. He arose and walked to the other end of the room, but Eden and Bertie were too much interested in each other to notice.

It was reunion of souls after a passage through the valley of the shadow of despair.

### CHAPTER XXXVIII.

Two days later Malcolm Carlton stood before the dwelling opposite his own.

He mounted the steps and pulled the bell gently.

"Good-afternoon, Bessie," he said to the little maid who answered the ring with suspicious promptness. "Is your mistress in?"

"Yes, sir."

"Ask her if I may come up."

"I know you may, sir. We saw you coming across the street, and Miss Nellie said she knew you were coming here."

"Did she?"

"Yes, sir. She's in the sitting room, sir."

"Thank you. I'll go up."

He walked by the girl and ascended the stairs slowly, as though some fresh trouble awaited him there. He knocked softly upon the door of Nellie's boudoir, and a sweet, girlish voice bade him enter.

A soft, clinging gown of black imparted to the little figure and tender face a thrill that touched even deeper than beauty.

She put out both hands eagerly, and Malcolm clasped them closely.

"I am so glad for you!" she cried, smiling into his face. "Mr. Staunton came to tell me the good news yesterday. I intended to have called last evening upon your sister, but some new boarders came, and I could not well leave. Will she receive me to-night?"

"Gladly. How good you are to be so pleased at our good fortune!"

"Ah, who should if not I? You and Mr. Staunton are the only friends I have ever known except—"

"Yes, I know. Don't let us talk about that now. I came on purpose to ask you to come to-night. You know Eden is not strong."

"I know."

"We concluded last night that she requires change of climate and of scenery. We are going to America. A Cunarder sails to-morrow, and we have determined that the sooner she leaves the better. Since the excitement is over, she seems dreadfully nervous."

"And they go to-morrow?"

"Yes, we go to-morrow."

There was a pause.

Something in the use of the pronoun struck Nellie as ominous. She lifted a pair of frightened eyes to his face.

"Do—you go?" she stammered.

"Yes."

"Oh!"

The exclamation was a peculiar one. The tender, tremulous lips had become suddenly, strangely dry; her eyes glistened, and a sharp pain stabbed through her heart.

She turned upon her mental self proudly. What right had she to care? she asked herself. He had been kind to her—that was all, that was all.

But the pride died, and a bitter weariness came upon her.

"I shall—miss you," she said, dreadingly.

"Is that all, Nellie?"

"Perhaps—not quite," endeavouring to subdue the sharp misery she felt must be in her voice. "Papa had few acquaintances, and it will be lonely for me. You have been so kind that I have learned to watch eagerly for your coming—Mr. Stanton and you, and—"

It was a sob! She struggled bravely against it, but it mastered her.

"Nellie!" exclaimed Malcolm, going a step nearer.

"See what a baby I am!" she hurried on, endeavouring to smile through an incontinence of tears. "I feel as if you were never coming back, and that I should never see you again. Of course that is perfectly absurd. You won't quite forget me, will you? and when you return, Mr. Stanton and you will look me up, will you not?"

"I can't answer for him, but I shall never forget you, Nellie. It would be taking the sweetest memory from my life."

She did not reply, but stood with downcast eyes, twisting a small, plain ring upon her finger.

"Will you not ask me to sit down, Nellie?" Malcolm said, gently. "Only half my errand is done. I have something else to tell you."

She pointed to a chair, and would have seated herself upon another, but that Malcolm took her hand and drew her down beside him upon a sofa.

We have known each other so short a time, Nellie, and you are such a child!" he said, softly, trying to look into the sweet, shy eyes, which she kept averted. "I wonder if you can understand and believe in the sudden leaping into life of a passion that will hold the heart and soul entranced for ever?"

He waited for a moment, but she did not speak. She forgot to do so—forgot that he held her hand, in the wild thrill of exultation that shot through her heart.

He loved her! She knew it because she felt the vibration from his soul to hers, and it intoxicated her with mad, roiling joy.

"I told you," he said, drawing closer to her, "that I had completed but half my errand. Nellie, will you listen while I tell you the other half? It is that I love you, dear—love you with all the strength and fervency of my nature. Before you speak to me, let me tell you the unhappy story of my life. Let me show you the difference, if I can, between love and imagination; and then Nellie, if you think you can love me in the real way, you will give the greatest joy it has ever known to a tired heart. Will you listen, dear?"

"No, there is no need. I know it all. Mr. Stanton told me all."

"Then I need not detail to you the nauseous story. It was not love, Nellie, but fascination—the loss of self for an hour in a maze of the brain wrapped in the luxuriance of personal beauty. It was never for a moment love, and I had begun to realise it before I lost her. There was no heart grief when I discovered her character—only a blow to my pride. But you—I have not allowed myself to consider a refusal. I think it would—kill me!"

"You have been so good to me—"

"Not gratitude—not gratitude!" he cried, dropping her hands as though the soft flesh had burned him. "Anything but that! I must have all or nothing—love for love, heart for heart, soul for soul!"

His face was strained and suffering, and glancing up for the first time, Nellie saw it. She put out her hands to him with impulsive tenderness.

"I love you next to Heaven!" she whispered, with irrepressible emotion.

With a low cry of incalculable happiness Malcolm clasped her in his arms.

"My darling—my wife!" he murmured, rapturously.

Half-an-hour later Bessie knocked at the door.

"Miss Nellie," she said, "a lady is downstairs asking for board."

"Tell her the house is full!" exclaimed Malcolm, unable to keep the gladness out of his voice.

"But you are mistaken, sir!" cried Bessie, opening her eyes very wide.

"No, I'm not. It is full but not of boarders, thank Heaven! Go down and send the lady away, Bessie, then come up here. Miss Nellie wants you to help her pack a trunk—or rather, to pack it yourself while she goes out with me."

"A trunk, sir?"

"Yes! Ladies usually travel with trunks, don't they?"

"Travel, sir?"

Malcolm laughed outright.

"Your mistress is going to sail for America to-morrow morning," he explained.

"Are you poking fun, sir?"

"No, of course not. We are to be married to-night, and to-morrow we are going away for our honeymoon. Would you like to go as Mrs. Carlton's maid, Bessie?"

"Indeed, then I should, sir; but I can't believe it yet, sir."

"I can hardly believe it myself, I am so absurdly happy."

"But the house, sir!" exclaimed practical Bessie.

"We'll leave that in the hands of an agent or something. My lawyer will attend to it. But you are forgetting the lady in the hall."

"So I am, sir."

The girl went downstairs, delivered some kind of a dazed message to the woman in the hall, and after she had closed the door upon the retreating figure she stood, half-bewildered, gazing about.

"To think he should choose my Miss Nellie, a quiet little thing like that!" she said, speaking the words aloud. "Why we read only last Sunday a list of the men worth more than a million, and he and Mr. Stanton were both mentioned way up. My, but he is rich! And it will all belong to Miss Nellie. Well, she deserves it all, and more. Heaven bless her!"

A quiet little wedding was performed that night.

The bride, with radiant happiness bubbling through sadness that was a memory, was clothed in a dainty, clinging white, unmarred by colour. The sweet face would have been considered almost beautiful but for its close proximity to the tropical loveliness of Eden, who seemed to shine with a new glory.

She was happy in her brother's happiness, but her eyes were lifted now and then to the dark, passionate face ever at her side, and smiled with bewildering content.

"No one on earth could be so blissfully happy as you and Bertie," she whispered, pressing the hand that held hers shyly. "I do not envy an angel!"

"My own wife!"

"Yes, that is it. All the joy conceivable by mortal is expressed in those three words. I loved you once before, I adore you now."

"My idol!"

But they were not happier than Malcolm and Nellie in their more subdued way. Her recent loss caused Malcolm to calm his enthusiasm; but their quiet glances, their gentle hand-clasps, told each other enough.

It was the rest needed by a weary soul to bask in the sweet peace of infinite content.

Bessie looked on, her eyes resting lovingly

upon her young mistress, and sparkling with delight.

"She isn't as pretty as Mr. Stanton's wife," she whispered, ruefully; "but the sun never shone on anyone so sweet and pure!"

## CHAPTER XXXIX.

"An old friend is in the drawing-room, and wishes to see you, my darling!"

Eden glanced into her husband's face inquiringly.

"An old friend?"

"Yes. Walter Marchmont."

The beautiful face crimsoned painfully, and leaning above her chair, Bertie whispered—

"I am afraid you have not told me the entire history of those days, my Eden."

She looked at him reproachfully.

"I had no right to tell you the secrets of anyone's life, Bertie," she answered.

"I know that. Will you go down?"

"Yes."

He kissed her at the door, and with deepest pity in her heart Eden went down alone.

Walter's emotion was too deep for words as Eden joined him. He took both her hands in a firm grasp and lifted them to his lips. She could not see how pale he was for the moisture of tears in her own eyes.

"Thank Heaven, you are safe!" he murmured, when he could command his voice, "Eden, Eden! I—"

He broke off, and with his handkerchief wiped from his forehead great drops of moisture; then, by a mighty effort, he controlled himself.

"We were terribly distressed—mother and all of us," he finished, tamely.

"Yes, I know. You were all so very good to me. I love your mother as much as I could my own. Is she well? And how is Sybil?"

"Both well, and loyal to you always. They will be so rejoiced to hear of your happiness, Eden. And you are happy, are you not, dear?"

There was a wistfulness in the tone infinitely touching, and it was very gently that she answered—

"Yes, I am happy, Walter."

There was a long pause, filled with feeling; then Marchmont said, slowly—

"You sail to-morrow, do you not?"

"Yes."

"I thought that was what—your—Mr. Stanton said. You will not quite forget me, Eden?"

"Could you think it? You were the best friend I ever knew."

"I would always be that, loyal and true."

"I am sure of that."

"There is something that I want to tell you, Eden, and I scarcely know how. Before I knew you, dear, I was engaged to a very beautiful young lady. She married another man, and I discovered that it was not love I had felt for her, but a most sincere admiration. But that was destroyed at what I believed to be her dishonourable treatment of me. Well, Eden, I found her several days ago—found her in distress and misery. The fault had not been hers, poor girl, and—Eden, she is Mrs. Brown, and when I can free her from the clog that was dragging her to desperation I am going to make her my wife."

"Oh, Walter, I am so glad!"

His face coloured violently, but he continued to look over her head with a steady stare.

"I knew Mrs. Brown," Eden continued, "and was so very, very sorry for her! You will give her my love, will you not, and tell her how glad I am?"

"I will."

"I will write from New York."

"That would be very kind, but I had rather you would do it only once, Eden. Forgive me, dear, but for her sake I want to forget you. There is nothing but starvation that can bring flesh to my love for you—denial of food of thought or word. I did not mean to speak



of it, but perhaps it is our eternal farewell, Eden, and it may be better so."

He spoke with a stony calm that was horrible, and Eden stretched out her hands to him with tender sympathy.

"You must not think it!" she cried. "In a few months you will learn to love her as you should, and then you can meet me as you would a sister."

"I hope so," lifting the damp hair from his brow with weary unrest.

"It will be so, believe me. Oh, Walter, don't look so miserable! I feel so unutterably selfish in my happiness that—"

"You must not! Do not think I am not glad for you? Why I would have given my life to have procured this happiness for you!"

"I know you would."

"I am going now, Eden. It is good-bye, dear, for years in any event. Will you—Kiss me once?"

She did not hesitate, but lifted her mouth as a child might have done—innocently, purely. His lips touched hers and fell away, half obliterated.

He sighed.

"Good-bye!" he said, huskily; "and Heaven bless you!"

He did not look back as he left her, but went unhesitatingly, as though he dared not trust his strength further.

Herbert Staunton found her there a few moments later.

"Why, Eden," he cried, gaily, "one would think you had been to a funeral instead of a wedding!"

She smiled a trifle wearily.

"There is always a shadow behind the sun, is there not, Bertie?" she asked, softly.

He understood, and drew her protectingly within his strong arms.

"Yes, my dearest," he answered, gently; "but as the world turns, the sun shines on all."

In the gray of the morning a merry party were driven to the pier.

As Eden was lifted gently from the carriage and stood beside her husband, a cold hand was laid upon her arm.

She turned, and saw a pale-faced woman beside her.

"Don't you know me, Mrs. Staunton?" the woman asked, duly.

"Why, it is Catherine! You have changed!"

"Yes, sadly changed. I heard you were going away—Jim told me—and I wanted to say good-bye and God-speed."

Eden's eyes filled slowly.

"That is very kind of you, Catherine."

"And I wanted to take a word of forgiveness from you to a poor sufferer that lies nigh unto death in a hospital."

"You mean—"

"Alice. She was my sister, ma'am."

"Your sister?"

"Yes, ma'am; but her beauty was her ruin. She is delicious now from the terrible burn, and her beauty is gone for ever. The doctors think she will get well, ma'am, and I know that there will come a time when a word of forgiveness from you for the wrong she did do and the greater one she tried to do would be the greatest comfort to her."

"You may give it to her freely and truly, Catherine. I had given it without the asking. Poor woman! Is there anything that I could do for her?"

"Nothing, ma'am. There was a time when I despised her for the manner in which she wrecked his life, and I felt that it would be a pleasure for me to kill her, but all that is changed now, ma'am. I think I would give my life to bring back the beauty to that poor, scarred face. It will be a horrible blow to her ma'am, but I will do what I can to comfort her."

"You are a good and noble woman, Catherine."

"I wish I deserved your words, ma'am."

Thank you for your great kindness to me, and if I never see you again, may Heaven be with you."

"And you?"

She turned away, and was soon lost in the shadows of a sunless day.

The party—a happy party—ascended the gang plank and left the old life behind, joyous in spite of clouds.

Six months later there was a death in the hospital, and with a tearless countenance Doris watched all that was left of Hugh Brown confined to earth.

There was no sham traces of tears, but with gentle kindness she sighed over a gruesome fate.

A year later she and Walter were married. In her wild happiness he grew peaceful and at rest, remembering the old love as a passionate dream and an awakening. His mother loves Hildegard devotedly, but there is a corner of the loyal old heart sacred yet to Eden.

Sybil is the same little hoyden, loving and beloved. It is to her sometimes as they sit hand in hand that Walter talks of Eden, but it is in a way that his wife would approve if she heard.

Jim Lewis is a reformed and respected man, and his wife has changed from a pale-faced, sad-eyed creature to a rosy, joyous little woman, happy in her husband's honesty and tenderness.

They very frequently call at a little ivy-clad residence out from the city, where a blind woman with a face horribly scarred is waited upon patiently day after day by a broken-hearted sister. If Alice is querulous, Catherine is always gentle, soothing and loving.

It is a pitiful picture, but a retribution.

Herbert Staunton and Malcolm Carlton, with their wives and Bessie, are still in America, with no cloud even as large as a man's hand to mar their perfect joy.

Past sorrows are laid to rest, pride is sunk in perfect love, and there is no happier woman upon earth than Bertie Staunton's wife!

[THE END.]

## AS THROUGH A LOOKING GLASS.

"Say yes, love!"

"But, my dear girl—"

"Now, Dick, don't be cross."

He was only a few months married. He was head over ears in love with his wife.

"I am not the least bit cross, darling!" he said, leaning back in his chair, and pulling both her arms down around his neck; "but don't you think forty pounds rather high for something we do not really need?"

"Oh, but we do, Dick!" she insisted, eagerly. "A person must have a cheval-glass nowadays. And this is a beauty. Bevelled Frenchplate, of course, and all framed in mahogany, the real rose mahogany, you know, and finished with polished brass. Why, Dick, it is a bargain at forty pounds!"

He smiled.

The furnishing of their pretty home had already cost a good deal. It was a handsome three-story house, in one of the most fashionable streets of the West-end.

"Mrs. Loftus has one," purred on the entreating voice, "not so handsome as this, though I'm sure it cost more."

She paused, waiting for the effect of that last shot. In her scheming consciousness she was well aware no more effective argument could be presented. For had she not refused Harry Loftus to marry Dick Grafton?

He rose, with a lenient laugh, from the richly-appointed breakfast table.

"I suppose you must have your way, you little despot!"

"Oh, you darling!" she cried, rapturously.

And she promptly paid him for his permission by giving him half-a-dozen delighted kisses then and there.

He went into the hall for his overcoat, and came back frieze-enveloped, and hat in hand.

"I'm pretty positive, Gertie," he said, "that not a looking-glass in Belgravia will have as sweet a face to reflect as will yours. It certainly ought to feel flattered. All the others would be jealous if they knew."

He was too lately married to have ceased the honeymoon habit of making pretty speeches.

Mrs. Grafton blushed in the prettiest manner imaginable.

"You deserve another kiss for that!" she declared.

She stood on tiptoe to give it to him. Then he folded up the morning paper, thrust it in his pocket, put on his hat, and went out.

Hardly had Dick Grafton left home when his victorious bride rushed upstairs to dress previous to making her coveted purchase.

When she descended to her carriage, quite a vision of fashion and loveliness in her leaf-brown plush and costly furs, she was a very proud woman indeed—proud of her home, her husband, and the beautiful mirror she was going to buy. And when she had ordered it to be sent to her residence, she thought with satisfaction of the pleasure she would take in showing her acquisition to Mrs. Loftus.

As she left a restaurant, after a dainty lunch, whom should she meet but Dick's particular friend, Ralph Rivers. At least he had been the particular friend of Dick's bachelor days. Now young Mrs. Grafton was very wise in her way. So she gave Mr. Rivers her hand and a gracious smile, and invited him up to dinner the following evening.

He had feared that his comradeship with Dick Grafton must end in the marriage of the latter. So it was with repressed surprise, and expressed gratitude, that he accepted the invitation.

"It's a pity," she said, with a compassionate sigh, as she was whirled along to a matinee, "that poor Mr. Rivers hasn't a nice wife and home like Dick!" Which reference evidenced the fact that Mrs. Grafton possessed a proper appreciation of her charming self.

The curtain had just risen, when a lady entered the theatre, and was ushered to the seat adjoining that of Mrs. Grafton.

"Why, Gertie!"

"My dear Rose!"

Though several years older than Gertie, Rose Carr had been her favourite friend. But it was a long time since they had met. A few weeks before Gertie's wedding, Rose Carr had received a summons to the bedside of a sick brother in the country, and had only lately returned.

"I was just speaking to an old friend of Dick's," said Mrs. Grafton between the acts. "I'm not sure that you know him. His name is Rivers."

Rose's rather faded face flushed brightly.

"Ralph Rivers?"

"Yes."

"I met him at Cheltenham five years ago," she said, a trifle nervously, Mrs. Grafton imagined.

"A casual acquaintance?"

"Well, no! Then in a burst of confidence: "We were engaged for three months."

"You were?" interestedly. "What broke it off?"

"Oh, he grew jealous, and—there's the curtain!"

Very little indeed did Mrs. Grafton hear of the last act—diplomatically busy was that bright brain of hers.

"Can't you," she asked Rose, as together they passed out of the theatre, "come over to dinner to-morrow evening?"

"To-morrow? Let me see! Yes, I'll come."

When Mrs. Grafton reached home she found her precious mirror there before her. She

was still admiring it when Dick reached home. She called to him over the banisters to come up and see her treasure.

"Isn't it lovely, Dick?"

"Lovely!" he assented.

He was gravely regarding the enthusiastic face in the glass.

"But I mean the mirror."

"I don't!" staccato and adorably.

He put his arm round her and they went down together.

When they were alone after dinner she broached her little plot.

"I met Mr. Rivers to-day," she said.

"You did?"

"Yes; and I asked him to come up to dinner to-morrow."

"That was nice of you, love!"

"And at the machine I met Rose Carr, and I asked her to come also."

"But, darling—"

"Well?"

"They were engaged, once."

She nodded.

"I know it. That was why I asked her."

"But the embarrassment! Neither will—"

"Oh, you stupid boy!" she laughed, "wait and see!"

The following evening, when Mr. Grafton came home, he found his wife's friend seated by the log fire, which it was fashionable that winter to affect.

He had just spoken a courteous welcome, when the door-bell rang. Almost immediately after Mr. Rivers was ushered in.

He was a tall, soldierly, well preserved man, gray-haired and handsome. He started at sight of the figure by the fireside. Then he went forward. Dick met him, and said,—

"Awfully glad to see you, Ralph. Miss Carr I believe you know."

With quickened heart-throbs, Ralph Rivers faced the music. He was tremendously glad to meet Rose Carr again.

Dinner was announced. To banish the restraint each dreaded the conversation was kept up with persistent gaiety. Suddenly occurred a startling interruption:

Bang!

Fiercely, sharply outrang the report of a revolver. All sprang to their feet. Blankly, with blanched faces, they looked around. Dick Grafton started for the door.

"Oh, don't!" wildly entreated his wife.

"You will be killed, dear! "Don't go!"

At that very moment a second shot was heard.

Grafton dashed out and up the stairs, his wife following him; and down dropped Rose Carr in a dead faint. When she revived she found herself seated in the host's chair, and Ralph Rivers bending solicitously over her. He was gently bathing her forehead with water from the carafe.

"Are you better, Rose?"

"Yes, thank you, Ralph;" her colour coming back with a rush.

"I was all wrong a few years ago, Rose."

"I was too hasty, Ralph."

"But I've loved you ever since, Rose."

"And I've refused two offers for your sake, Ralph."

"You angel!"

When they finally decided to go upstairs and discover the cause of the commotion, they found Mr. and Mrs. Grafton ruefully regarding the ruins of their mirror, which was fractured from side to side.

"An attempted burglary," explained Grafton, indicating a half-open satchel near the window. "The fellow had got his bag filled with jewellery, silver, toilet articles, and whatever he could pick up, when he observed his reflection in the mirror, and, thinking probably that he was detected, fired at his supposed enemy the shots we heard."

"See!" cried Gertie, half hysterically, "here are the marks of his feet on the window ledge! He must have got out that way—slid down the porch pillar and escaped. My poor, dear, lovely oval-glass!"

"Well," cried Grafton, with a laugh, "let

us be glad [he did] not get away with his plunder!"

Late they sat discussing the affair, and when they finally broke up it was Ralph Rivers who saw Miss Carr home.

"Dick," ecstatically confided young Mrs. Grafton to her husband the following night, "Rose has been here, and she and Ralph are going to be married! And it's all on account of my mirror!"

"How's that, dear?"

"Why, if I hadn't bought it the burglar couldn't have shot at it. And if he hadn't shot at it we wouldn't have run upstairs. And if we hadn't run upstairs they wouldn't have had an opportunity to make it up."

Dick laughed out in hearty amusement.

"I really believe I was inspired to buy it," avowed Gertie, solemnly.

"Yes, darling!" meekly assented Dick.

But he groaned, remembering the cheque he had drawn to pay for it.

"Besides," she cried, convincingly, "if the mirror had not been there you'd have been killed, for that awful man was trying to shoot you."

To this remarkable argument Dick returned the only reply a woman's logic should ever receive—a kiss.

### THE WEAPON OF FASCINATION.

It is an unfortunate truth that a good man is rarely a fascinating one. His very virtues forbid romance and romantic exploit. The faithful Dobbin could have died for his Amelia; but imagine him twanging a guitar under her balcony, or boldly pursuing her after the fashion of Dennis Daval! The veriest scoundrel that ever drew breath is apt to be a thousandfold more magnetic than he who, having marked out an ethical path for himself, proceeds religiously to follow it. Women like insinuating manners and soft spoken words. They represent, as it were, what a garniture of trifles represents on an *entree*. They give flavour as well as artistic beauty. The fascinating man is always a skilled artist. He must assume, if he have it not, a tenderness that never loses sight of itself. His devotion must be open enough to flatter a woman's vanity, bold enough to command her respect. But he must likewise take care that his *modus operandi* is never discovered or its existence ever suspected. Otherwise he is lost. The courage and independence born of possession unfortunately incite to the reckless expression of absolute truth, and a man who desires to please a woman should never tell the whole truth. Suggest it, play with it, ignore it entirely, but reveal it, never! Men of the world understand this. The Latin races are adepts in the art of fascination. Why? Because they are always lovers, or pretend to be lovers, which in the end amounts to about the same thing. Emerson expressed an unalterable truth when he said: "All the world loves a lover." But in order to be a lover it is not necessary to rush into vulgar protestation of affection. A glance of the eye a pressure of the hand, the particular curl of the lip in a smile, the hundred trivial courtesies that appeal to the feminine sympathies, are embodied in the man who fascinates. And when he has once mastered the secret of feminine inclination and the special qualifications of feminine taste his way is clearly marked. Be he ugly as Satan he will not fail in personal magnetism.

EVERY school boy knows that Queen Anne is dead; but every school boy does not know the origin of the phrase. At a literary sale recently the original letter of Addison's was sold, in which he communicated the decease of the Queen in his most polished style to the readers of the *Spectator*, long after everyone in England had heard of it.

## FIRES UNSEEN.

—J.—

### CHAPTER XXII.

MARTIN longed to set out in search of his master, but he would not leave his invalid guest.

"No, no, sir," said he, when pressed by Churchill Penance to lose no time, "this is a matter which wants a good deal of thinking out, so that we may lose no time in a false move; and until you are better I do not mean to stir; and then perhaps, sir, you will help me in the search."

"With my life!" was Churchill's grave rejoinder. "You must not forget that the discovery of Valentine Eyre is a matter of life and death to me."

So the days went by, and sick and sad as he was, Churchill could not help smiling at the many devices which Martin invented to relieve the enforced inactivity which, without occupation, would have been more than he could bear.

Such extraordinary things as Martin seemed suddenly to deem perfectly necessary to his patient's recovery, and all these had to be procured from a distance, so that the faithful creature spent the greater part of every day on foot.

And during the absence of his nurse and host Churchill poured out his whole heart in a letter to Romola, telling her all the past, and imploring her forgiveness for the cruel mistake which had led him to misjudge and leave her.

He urged no plea for himself, and did not even allude to his dangerous illness. But many copies were written and destroyed again before Churchill could feel that he had sufficiently portrayed the remorse and misery of his heart.

At length, however, the letter was on its way to England, and then Churchill noticed a sudden change in the demeanour of Martin. Instead of being restless, as he had been for the last two or three days, Martin seemed absorbed in thought, and would remain sitting for hours by the table, with his head on his hands, apparently quite heedless of all that was passing around him, and there seemed a chance that the invalid's real needs would now be forgotten.

This extraordinary state of things lasted for three days, and then all was explained, for Martin, who had been that morning even more depressed than usual, suddenly started from his seat, exclaiming,—

"Sir, may I ask if you believe in dreams?"

Churchill smiled at the intensity of the man's manner, and then replied,—

"In some dreams. But why do you ask?"

"Because, sir, I have had the same dream now for the last three nights; and if visions wasn't a thing of the past I'd say as how mine was one. But listen, sir, and I'll tell you how mine came about," and then, after a slight pause, Martin went on,—

"It was Wednesday night, sir, that I lay down without any more notion of sleep than I have this minute, and immediately I went off into a dream, in which I remember nothing but these words. 'St. Jago-street, Number 11, Rio San Vopez,' and when I awoke in the morning I couldn't get rid of the words," continued Martin. "They rang in my mind all day, and when night came on there they were again, and last night the same. Now, sir, you are looking doubtful at me, and I know what you'll say that with my thoughts always dwelling on my master it was only natural I should dream of him. But I never heard of St. Jago-street at Rio San Vopez, nor did I think of the place one way or another until I had that dream, and so I think, sir, you must confess that there is something out of the common in it."

Churchill smiled again. He did not think that there was anything strange or wonderful



in the dream, for which he was able to account in a most natural way.

Rio San Voge, he knew, was the last place in which Martin had seen his master, and it was only to be expected that the town would recur to the man's memory in this anxious time. But out of pity and kindness Churchill forebore from a discouraging word, and only said, quietly,—

"I do not believe in such dreams, Martin, but at the same time I have heard of them being realised before now; and I think that our first steps ought to be directed to Rio San Voge. Therefore to-morrow I propose that we start on our voyage of discovery, for I am now quite well."

And Martin, in the impatience of his heart, was only too glad to take his patient at his word, and full of the most sanguine hopes for the result of their journey he began at once to make preparations for the morrow's start.

Once more it was the town of Rio San Voge, and in the earliest dawn of morning a woman was abroad in the streets seeming, as she moved along, to resemble more the gliding shadow of night than a living human presence. The skirt of her sombre black garment made no sound on the pavement, and her step was that of velvet. She was very tall, and her slender form was attired in the plain gown and long cloak of a Sister of Charity. A large ugly bonnet completed the melancholy effect of this garb, and from it a long veil was thrown back, revealing a face pale and high-bred, with finely formed features, but neither of youth nor gladness, for these had succumbed to the same hand which had changed the once radiant hair to silver whiteness.

This woman was known in Rio San Voge as Sister Bertha, of the Convent of St. Catherine's. But twelve years ago she was Blanche Hastings, a queen of London society, who played with men's hearts without pity or scruple.

An ice queen people had called the fair beauty, and Lady Fitzroy said that the title was well deserved, and as Blanche refused one brilliant offer after another, she began to grow very impatient, telling her *protégée* in an indignant way that if she did not take care, she would let her last chance go by and have to resign herself to old maidenhood, to all of which Blanche had listened with her chilly smile, and gone on refusing offers which not another woman in London but would have accepted gladly; and then, when Lady Fitzroy was beginning to despair, Blanche suddenly electrified London society by accepting a man old enough to be her grandfather.

True, he was a peer of the realm, but beyond this fact and the length of his rent-roll there was nothing to recommend Lord Clonsard. He was old, he was ugly; he was, report said, very wicked, but Blanche Hastings had accepted him, and gifts and congratulations poured in on the bride-elect from near and far. While Lady Fitzroy rejoiced and forgot her anger against that abominable Zitella Czarvar, as she called the girl whom Valentine Eyre would have married, but her ladyship did not think it strange that Blanche Hastings had accepted the wicked old peer on the very day in which Valentine Eyre had fled from London to learn forgetfulness of Zitella in far-off lands.

But poor Lady Fitzroy was doomed to another and far more bitter failure of her hopes, for while the preparations for the marriage went on, and gifts and good wishes poured in, Blanche Hastings suddenly disappeared, only leaving a line to say that her engagement was broken off, and in a few days she would write and explain all.

In a few days, the very day on which the wedding ought to have taken place the promised letter arrived, and having read it Lady Fitzroy put it in the fire with a solemn vow that Blanche's name should never again cross her lips, for in that letter Blanche had declared herself dead to the world for ever.

She had, she said, embraced the faith of the Church of Rome, and had devoted her future life and the fortune of which she was mistress to the Convent of St. Catherine's.

Lady Fitzroy was not only angry and disappointed when this news came, for she had loved Blanche dearly, and it caused her bitter pain to think that in a moment of madness the young girl should have thrown away her life.

Knowing the strength of Blanche's will, Lady Fitzroy thought that every appeal would be wasted, and so she made none; but had she guessed the truth she would not have rested until she had snatched the girl back from the living grave to which she had consigned herself; but Lady Fitzroy never dreamed that poor Blanche's life was a torture because of one despairing cry which rang ever in her ears,—

"Zitella! Zitella! Zitella!"

It was the vain hope that in a life of evil and ceaseless penance she might forget Valentine Eyre which had driven Blanche from the world, which, with all her outward coldness and seeming disdain, she had passionately loved.

Vain hope. Blanche soon learned that her atonement was all in vain as far as Valentine Eyre was concerned.

Night and day his bitter cry rang in her ears. Night and day his white, stricken face rose before her as she had seen it in the hour when he discovered Zitella's falsehood, the hour in which Blanche had first understood clearly that she might sooner cause the seas to pass away than she could win the love of Valentine Eyre.

But she might forget him, she thought, and so she accepted the wicked old Earl, and in a month she was kneeling on the stone floor of her convent cell; but while she repeated wildly the prayers which the priest had taught her her heart was crying out more bitterly than ever for forgiveness from Valentine Eyre, and to-day, after twelve years of harsh discipline of prayers, and penitence, and fasting, her heart knows no other cry, while the sisters of her convent, and the sick and poor among whom her life is spent, think that there is none so utterly dead to the world as Sister Bertha.

They make a great mistake, as Blanche knows, and when the stern abbess speaks a word of praise the unhappy woman turns away to hide a smile of bitter scorn.

Valentine Eyre, living or dead, is still her world, and her heart, because of him, can never be at rest, but she feels a sort of contemptuous pity for those whom she has so easily deceived.

"Why did I not marry the old Earl?" said Blanche to herself, as she paced the street of Rio San Voge. "The penance of the world would have been every whit as hard as this, and had there been any hope of oblivion I should have found it there."

But it was the hope of one day learning something of Valentine Eyre which had directed Blanche's steps to Spain, for this was the country that he loved, and naturally she thought he would fly to it for consolation from his sorrow; and so, though long years passed without bringing any fulfilment of her hope, Blanche was still upheld in her dreary work among the sick and poor by the thought that one day she should meet Valentine Eyre, and having told the wrong she had done him, win forgiveness from his lips, and perhaps hear that time had healed his sorrow.

"Zitella was utterly unworthy of him," said Blanche, to herself; "but that does not make my guilt less, and if I could look on his face and hear him say that the evil was over, I could gladly die in that moment."

At this moment Blanche heard a sudden step beside her, and, turning, she saw two persons, one of whom asked if she would direct them to St. Jago-street.

"I am going there," replied Blanche, who by this question had been quickly recalled to the realities of life in a moment. She was

once more Sister Bertha, without human hopes or longings; and as such she proceeded to guide the two strangers, who, as they listened to her words, cast looks full of excitement on one another.

"It is a very bad quarter of the town," said Sister Bertha, referring to the destination of all three. Perhaps you do not know," she continued, "that a dreadful fever is raging there at present, and that is the reason why I am on my way thither, for my life is given to the nursing of the sick."

"Oh, sir, you hear this lady!" said Martin, for the strangers were none other than Churchill Penance and his humble friend. "She says the place is full of fever, and if so, I must not allow you to go on."

"What a woman can brave I do not mean to shrink from!" replied Churchill, moving forward.

"Ah, you mistake, it is my duty," replied Blanche, turning to him with a grave, sad smile. "My life is given up to this work, and there are none to mourn me if I fall ill; but it cannot be so with you," she added, looking on the Englishman's handsome face. "There must be those who would grieve bitterly were any evil to befall you."

"There are those who would grieve were I to behave like a coward," replied Churchill. "But I also have a duty to fulfil, which is as sacred as yours, and I must not shrink from it!"

But here Martin stepped forward, entreating Blanche to dissuade Churchill from so rash and unnecessary a step as he was bent on taking.

"Lady," said he, in Spanish, "this gentleman has been very ill, and as Providence led him to me, I feel answerable for his safety. If he gets a relapse of the fever, from which he has just recovered, I shall never cease to upbraid myself; and there is nothing," added Martin, "to be gained by his coming with me to this fever-stricken place."

Blanche heard the man with patience, and her face softened as she listened. She looked at him, and wondered what memory his countenance recalled. She glanced from him to Churchill, but in his face there was nothing familiar. Then she returned to the ex-valet, saying gently,—

"I will do what I can to influence your friend; but surely you are English, and if so I would rather hear you speak in the language, for it is my own."

"I am English, madam," replied Martin, respectfully, and then he also began to find something familiar in the face of the nun, who had turned to Churchill, and, in fulfilment of her promise, was endeavouring to dissuade him from coming any further; but all her entreaties were in vain, and seeing that she only strengthened the young man's resolve, she at length desisted from her arguments, and the trio moved forward.

"I trust there are no friends of yours in this fever-stricken part of the town?" said Blanche to Martin, whose anxiety and impatience grew more apparent with every step.

"Oh, madam!" replied the ex-valet, "that remains to be proved. I am seeking a friend who has been lost for years, and I would gladly find him here, for I have been seeking him in vain for the past twelve years."

"Ah! how I pity you," exclaimed Blanche; and the pang which shot through her heart as she thought of her own sorrow, gave her face an expression which was nothing less than heavenly. "I am so sorry for you," she went on, "on account of your long waiting," and I hope, from my heart, that you may find your friend. But I know nearly all in this town," she continued, gently, "and if you will confide to me the name of him for whom you are seeking, I may be able to help you?"

"I thank you, madam," replied Martin, "and though I fear you cannot help me, I will tell you all. It is my master for whom I am seeking—my master, who, as I firmly believe, was made away with by some foul means twelve years ago, in this very town, and if you

lived here then, madam, you may have heard his name, which was Valentine Eyre."

As Martin pronounced the name a cry of pain broke from Blanche's pale lips, and seeing her way to and fro Churchill sprang forward to save her from a fall, but she steadied herself, saying calmly,—

"No, do not fear, I shall not faint; but I have been shocked, that is all, for I knew Valentine Eyre long ago, when I lived in the world as Blanche Hastings. Now I know," she added, turning to Valence, "why your face puzzled me, for I must have seen you in London at the time when your master was engaged to Miss Czarvas, but," with a sudden change of manner, "I must not forget that I am no longer Miss Hastings, but Sister Bertha, and my place is among the sick and suffering," so, with a suppressed sigh of weariness or pain, Blanche moved forward, and was followed in silence by the two men, until at last they turned into a dark, narrow street, and having paused before a doorway, Blanche turned to her companions, and said,—

"This is St. Jago-street, and here I must leave you, for there is a man laid down with fever within these walls. Perhaps he is already dead. I hope not," and then, pushing in the door, which was not fastened in any way, the Sister of Mercy entered the gloomy dwelling, leaving the two men standing in the street.

No sooner, however, had Blanche left them, than Martin turned to Churchill, saying in an excited tone,—

"Look, sir! look at the door! It is marked with the 'Number 11,' and it is in that house that we shall learn what has become of my master!"

Churchill could not help feeling a thrill of excitement as he remembered how and why they had come to Rio San Vopez, still he told himself that there was nothing in Martin's dream. The meeting with an old friend of Valentine Eyre's, and the number on the door, was merely a coincidence, but for all that it was very strange.

"What shall we do?" he asked at length, and without hesitation. Martin replied,—

"Wait here, sir, until Miss Hastings comes out again, and then she may help us further. Oh!" he continued, with a burst of feeling; "I remember her clearly now, though until she spoke of my master I could not think who she was, sir. She used to be the most beautiful lady in London, and it was always known that she loved my master. If he had married her," added Martin, with a sigh, "how different every thing might have been!"

Churchill was on the point of saying that it was not yet too late to retrieve matters, but he remembered that Blanche had called herself a consecrated woman, and he wondered if the vows which bound her were irrevocable.

He remembered also that Valentine Eyre was not yet found, and so his thoughts slipped back to Romola and England. Nor did he know what a length of time had passed until once more Blanche made her appearance in the street, and one look at her white face and wild eyes told those who were waiting for her that something very strange and shocking had happened.

The two men looked first at the pale, trembling woman and then at one another; but as one name broke from the lips of both Blanche stepped up to Martin, and laying her thin, white hand on his arm, said in a voice that was broken with emotion,—

"Yes, my friend, the hour that you and I have lived for has come at last for Valentine Eyre is here!"

For one moment Martin looked at Blanche with dull, pained unbelief in his eyes, and it seemed as if he would implore her not to be so cruel as to mock him with such a tale; but even his dazed shocked senses must have gathered from the face which gazed into his own that the words he had heard were true, for as he tried to speak the poor man reeled to and fro, and put up both his hands as if in some hope of steadying himself or recalling

his scattered senses, and then the name of his master was shrieked forth; and before Churchill could collect himself sufficiently to spring to the poor man's assistance, Martin had reeled more violently than before, and fallen to the ground.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

"Do not be afraid," said Blanche gently, addressing Churchill, as she bent over the prostrate form of Martin. "Do not reproach yourself," she continued, "he is not hurt or ill, but this joy is keener than pain, and he has fainted beneath it; but with such remedies as I have here he will soon come round."

As she spoke Blanche produced from a sort of pouch, which hung by her side, a tiny phial which contained, as she explained, a wonderful concoction of herbs.

"In my daily rounds among the sick and poor," said Blanche, "I find it well to be always provided with these things, and have restored many an one with this particular concoction."

After which she proceeded to pour a few drops of the liquid down the throat of the unconscious man, who soon began to show signs of returning life and memory, and as the warming liquid began to course more freely through his veins and full power of mind and body returned, Valence sat up, and grasping Blanche's hands in his, implored of her, almost with tears, to tell him that all he had heard was not a dream.

"It was no dream," replied Blanche, gravely, "and if you do not fear to enter this fever-stricken house you will find your master, but you must be strong and calm, for it is not the old Valentine Eyre you will see, but one who has been fondly dealt with, and whose wrongs you must avenge!"

"Oh, my master!" cried Valence, "only let me see his face that I may make sure all this is no dream!" and then, with the help of Churchill, the poor creature rose to his feet.

In breathless silence the trio entered the house, and at the first glance Churchill saw that it was the abode of every sort of crime and desperate deed.

He thought shudderingly of another house in this very town, and how he had been bewitched and fatally blinded by the loveliness of Inez Valdez. But now that the glamour was over it seemed quite natural to connect her with the mysterious disappearance of Valentine Eyre.

They passed into a room which smelled strongly of the disinfectant fluids that Blanche had taken the precaution to scatter freely over the floor and scanty furniture. And here there was a bed containing a silent form covered with a cloth, which Blanche carefully removed, and then waving the others back, she said, gently,—

"This poor wretch was in the pay of Hermann Eyre, Valentine's brother, and for twelve years he did his wicked work, but you must try and forgive him now, for he was won by the kindness which I had shown him for the past six weeks, and before he died, half an hour ago, he made full confession, but it was," she added, "that his comrades in crime had fled from their stronghold as soon as the fever visited it, otherwise Valentine Eyre might have been doomed to die in the cellar, which has been his prison for the last twelve years."

Both Churchill and Martin glanced at one another in silence, for what they had heard seemed too horrible for belief. But the twelve years of her labours among the poor and wretched had accustomed Blanche to such things, and it was almost without emotion that she dropped the sheet once more over the dead man's face.

"We must not judge him," she said, "for he has gone to answer for his sins before the Judge of all men; but now we must care for

the living," and then, pointing to a certain square in the stone flooring, she continued, in tones of forced calm,—

"Valentine Eyre's prison is just beneath us; if you would reach him you must remove that flag."

The spell which bound the two men seemed broken by these words, and together they sprang forward, aiding one another to remove the heavy stone, which yielded slowly to their efforts, and when at last the way of descent was clear, Churchill stepped back, delaying as if to wipe the damp of exhaustion from his brow, but in reality to let the two who had loved Valentine Eyre descend by themselves.

He watched them disappear through the aperture, and standing there felt inclined to believe that it was all some wild delusion of his fancy, but a cry from the vault beneath assured him that all was only too real, and rousing himself in the belief that his assistance might be required, he began slowly to descend the stone steps until he found himself in a horrible damp smelling cellar, lighted by an oil lamp, which hung suspended from the ceiling, and here Churchill saw a sight which to his dying day was never forgotten.

Blanche's calm was broken up completely, and the long-suppressed love and anguish of her heart was being poured forth in a torrent of prayers and tears, whose passionate force caused Martin to stand by as if he were but a pitiful onlooker of this most sad and touching scene.

Blanche was kneeling on the damp ground beside the couch on which Valentine Eyre was lying. Her cloak was flung back, and her arms were stretched out encircling the man, who was gazing at her with wide open eyes, but who did not seem to comprehend one of her tender words, or be in the least way moved by her tears and passionate gestures.

"He is conscious," thought Churchill, "but the poor fellow's memory is gone; the wonder is that he lives."

And as he glanced at the white, emaciated face, with its thick frame of unkempt hair, there surged up in the young man's breast a wave of pity and passionate desire to avenge this crime.

He clenched his hands together, and something like an imprecation broke from his lips as his eyes fell on a table near the couch, and saw the loathsome mess which seemed to be the remains of Valentine Eyre's last meal.

But then, remembering that this was a time for prompt action and not angry thoughts, Churchill stepped up to Martin, down whose cheeks tears were beginning to roll thick and fast, and laying his hand on the valet's shoulder, the young man said in strong, clear tones,—

"We have discovered the most heartless and brutal crime which has ever been committed, but remember that if we would save the victim of it there is not a moment to be lost. So you, Martin, must help me to prepare a litter, on which we can remove Valentine Eyre; and when we have summoned medical aid we must set the local authorities on the track of the gang of thieves and murderers who seemed to have made this place their stronghold."

So speaking, Churchill proceeded to climb once more into upper air, when he was followed, mechanically, by Martin, who, in the deadly fear that his master's reason would never be recovered, seemed incapable of action until Churchill quickened him into life and action with some words of Hermann and vengeance.

Between them, out of such materials as came to hand, the two men improvised a litter, and on this, when they had with some difficulty borne him from his prison, Valentine Eyre was laid, when, accompanied by Blanche, they left the house with its dead occupant, securing the door firmly behind them, when they carried their burden to the rooms which Churchill and Martin had engaged for themselves on the previous night, and to which, after some little parley and a gift of money, Valentine



Eyre was admitted by the landlord, who had a marked dread of all manner of sickness.

From this place Blanche sent word to the Convent to say that she had taken up a case of sickness, which would, in all probability, keep her occupied for many weeks; and when both Martin and Churchill Penance had gone in different ways—on in search of medical aid, the other to procure some things which were necessary for the sick man's comfort, and left her alone with her old love—Blanche found it hard to act as Sister Bertha should act.

She knelt by the bed in which they had laid Valentine Eyre, and told herself with the most bitter upbraiding that it was her selfish love which had brought him to this.

She pressed the pale, bloodless hands in hers, and dropped tears and kisses of passionate love and sorrow on the lips that needed her not.

"Oh Heaven, hear me!" she prayed, wildly; "let me suffer alone for this, it was my fault—my sin—let me only eat the bitter fruit!"

There were steps outside in the corridor, and once more Blanche Hastings was Sister Bertha. Dropping the handkerchiefs had clasped so wildly, she rose and straightened herself, and drew down the window-blinds that the traces of her emotion might not be seen on her cheek; but as these preparations were completed she remembered that there had been witnesses to her passionate outcry a little while ago, and then the door was gently opened, and Churchill entered with a very old man, whom he introduced as Dr. Maynard, and who, as it turned out, was not unknown to Sister Bertha of the Convent of St. Catherine's.

He had stood by her side at more than one sick bed, and seen her pass through harrowing scenes without emotion; but now as Churchill, at a sign from him, drew up the blinds, and the light fell on the nun's pale face, even the doctor's dim eyes could see that it bore the trace of bitter tears. And at this the old man was very much surprised, for, beyond the fact that his services were urgently needed, Churchill Penance had discreetly told him nothing.

"You are over-wrought, sister," said the doctor, in a kind tone, as he took Blanche's hand; and schooling herself to the manner of the convent, Blanche replied,—

"I have been up all night, and stood by a death bed this morning; but never mind me, doctor, you are wanted there."

And she pointed to the bed from which, after a few moments' puzzled silence, Doctor Maynard recoiled in horrified disbelief.

"Good Heavens!" he exclaimed, at last; "is it possible that I am looking at Valentine Eyre?"

"Then you know him?" asked Blanche, breaking the silence which followed these words.

"I know him well," replied the doctor, slowly, "it indeed this mummy-like being is Valentine Eyre, but I can scarcely believe it!" he added, with returning horror. "How comes it about that he is here in this terrible condition?"

Blanche kept silence. She felt that it was not her place to utter a word; but there was no need for her to speak, for as soon as Churchill Penance could find a voice he poured forth the whole story of crime and falsehood which had brought Valentine Eyre to this state; but when he reproached himself in the most bitter terms as being the chief cause of all the misery, Dr. Maynard shook his head.

"No, my friend," he said, sadly, "I'm only afraid that you wrong yourself when you take the blame of this. It would be hard," he added, gravely, "to say who was the cause of this evil; but I am afraid that I have more to answer for than any of you can guess."

"You!" exclaimed Blanche and Churchill in one breath, and both looked at the doctor with wondering eyes.

"Yes," he went on. "You are both surprised. All the same, what I say is perfectly

true. I knew Valentine Eyre long ago, and with the best intentions in the world I counselled him to take a step from which all this evil has sprung, and not only that," added the doctor; "but later on I entered into a plot against him. However, the story is too long to be told now, and unless I attend to my patient it may never be told at all!"

As he spoke the good old doctor went to Valentine Eyre's side; but he had scarcely bent over the bed when the door opened to admit another physician, who had been summoned by the anxious Martin, and who being also English, was now warmly welcomed by his colleague, who saw that this case was one which required the utmost care and skill.

The two medical men, therefore, entered into a hurried explanation; after which Churchill and Martin found themselves obliged to leave the room, the door of which was mercifully shut against them for the space of an hour, at the end of which Dr. Maynard appeared, and to the indescribable joy of both assured them that nothing but time and care was needed for the physical and mental recovery of Valentine Eyre, whereupon poor Martin relieved his over-wrought feelings with a flood of tears—a weakness of which he seemed very much ashamed—and for which he felt to apologise by saying repeatedly to Churchill,—

"Oh! sir, you will think me a weak, dozing old man, but I have hungered and thirsted for some news of my master through these last twelve years, and all this is so strange and sudden that if I didn't find some way of showing my feelings I believe I should go mad."

"What nonsense, Martin!" rejoined Churchill, in a cheery tone, that showed how strong was his own emotion. "Why, man," he went on, "your tears only prove that you are the best fellow in the world, but remember," he added, sternly, "that when the proper time of reckoning comes, no mercy must be shown to those who played this foul trick on your master!"

"Oh, no fear of that, sir!" rejoined Martin, and he frightened himself, and put on an expression which was supposed to indicate the most fierce and threatening persecution of Valentine Eyre's false brother, but in his heart Martin dreaded to think of vengeance. It seemed unworthy, he thought, when his master had been restored to him; but he had not the courage to remind Churchill Penance that words of forgiveness best suited the lips of those who had been shown great mercy, but he did manage to say very humbly,—

"I am so thankful, sir, for my master's life being spared to me, that I can't find it in my heart to think badly towards anyone, and perhaps the Almighty is better pleased when we leave the reckoning to Him. At all events, you'll agree with me, Mr. Penance, that as we all need mercy and hope for pardon it is better not to be too hard."

"You are right, Martin," replied Churchill, quickly and heartily, but every word had pierced him like a sword thrust, and he turned away feeling that he had learned a lesson which would never be forgotten.

His thoughts of his own sinful past during the madness of which every scruple of honour and conscience had been made subservient to the gratification of the moment, and in fearful tones Churchill Penance asked pardon of Heaven for his presumption, and mercy for the future, not only for himself, but for those whom he no longer dared to judge or condemn, and in that hour if Zephia could have knelt before Churchill's feet and asked pardon for her crimes against him, the world have been mercifully and freely forgiven.

Three days passed away, during which Blanche treasured each moment as misers treasure the gold which is dearer to them than life.

Three days, during which Blanche lived in a dream of bliss too great for reality, like one who passes through a half-waking vision of some fairy scene.

She feared almost to breathe or move else her eyes should open to find all the beauty vanished.

While outwardly she was Sister Bertha, calm and unemotional, almost callous, those who watched her might have said her heart and brain were in a ferment of delicious joy beyond all power of description.

At the most the hope of Blanche's heart through long years had been to kneel once before she died at the feet of Valentine Eyre, and confess the part which she had taken against him, and win in return the words of forgiveness which, as a generous man, he could not refuse.

"They were," over and over again she had told herself, "the least he could give, the most she could expect."

Over and over again she had rehearsed this part in fancy, had knelt and breathed her confession, and having won forgiveness and a kind word, such as the heart of a noble man can frame, she had pictured herself going forth to her way unto the end, desolate and unblest, but freed from the burden of guilt and remorse.

For this Blanche had hoped, and no more, and now, oh! wondrous joy! it was her privilege to smooth Valentine's pillow, to hold the cup to his fevered lips, to spend her strength night and day in winning back the life which might, she hoped and prayed, be blessed and happy.

Poor Blanche! No wonder that she scarcely dared to breathe, lest all should prove an illusion.

So three days passed, and then both the doctors began to fear that they had been too sanguine, for it suddenly seemed as if no amount of care or skill could save Valentine Eyre, who was now the prey of a terrible fever, caught in the foul air of the place from which he had been rescued, and as Blanche stood by his bed and saw his emaciated form, and heard his wild, unintelligible ravings, it needed no medical knowledge to assure her that the victory of death over life was all but won.

"If I could only give my life instead of his!" she wailed, piteously.

And as he entered the room noiselessly Doctor Maynard heard the words, and wondered what they meant; but when he reached Blanche's side, he was at a loss, for no marble could be colder, more passionless than her face. When she laid her hand lightly on the sick man's brow its touch was like ice, and not the faintest trembling of those thin, white fingers spoke to Doctor Maynard of the fires which were raging in the breast of that pale, self-contained woman; but with his sad and varied knowledge of human life, the Doctor could not be long in finding a reason for the words which he had just heard, and in his own mind he came to the following very natural conclusion:—

"Poor Sister Bertha, poor soul, she is a comparatively young woman, and must have been once the possessor of rare beauty. No doubt with those eyes and that queenly form she wrung sighs from many a heart. But what sorrow caused her to turn from the world is none of my business, only I can see that the poor creature has found more than once that there is no more peace within the walls of a convent than without, and so I pity her from my heart for the mistake she has made, poor soul." And here the Doctor sighed, as he glanced at the face so white by contrast with the nun's black dress. "Poor soul," he repeated, "it is no wonder that she is so weary of this shadow of a life, that she longs for the power to lay it down for anyone whose case seems less hopeless, though I am afraid that such prayers won't do much for Valentine Eyre." And then, remembering the purpose with which he had entered the room the Doctor abandoned his musing, and said, aloud,—

"You are a capital nurse, Sister Bertha, the best I have ever met; but I fear that as



[DESCENDING THE STONE STEPS, CHURCHILL SAW A SIGHT HE NEVER FORGOT TO HIS DYING DAY!]

for as this poor fellow is concerned your labour is all in vain!"

"Oh, do not say so!" gasped Blanche, and withdrawing her hand from the sick man's brow, she turned towards the Doctor a face which must have revealed all her secret. But Doctor Maynard had transferred his gaze to his patient, and so the love and despair in the woman's face were lost upon him; and, heedless of the pain he was inflicting, the Doctor went on,—

"I would say anything else sooner than this, Sister Bertha, for I have much to reproach myself with for Valentine Eyre's sake; but I fear that there is nothing else to be said except this, that we made a mistake when we promised to pull him through, but though it seems that the poor fellow is doomed, nothing must be left undone. I wish," he continued, gloomily, "that we had moved him out into the country at first, then there might have been some chance, but here everything is against him. However, all that is useless now, and though he can only linger at the most for a few more days, I am going to make the only reparation which lies in my power, by telegraphing at once for his wife, so that the poor soul may have some chance of reconciliation before—"

But here Doctor Maynard suddenly paused, startled into silence by the pitiful cry which had broken from Sister Bertha's lips, and before he could speak again she had grasped his arm with both her trembling hands, gazing at him the while with eyes full of wonder and anguish.

"His wife!" she gasped, wildly. "What do you mean when you say that you will telegraph for Valentine Eyre's wife? Surely he did not marry her, or another? Oh, for Heaven's sake explain! Tell me who is Valentine Eyre's wife!"

Doctor Maynard was so astonished by this unexpected outbreak that for several moments he could not speak; but when Blanche began

to repeat her wild entreaties he recovered his presence of mind, and, remembering his patient, implored her to be calm; and then unclasping her hands from his arm, he seated her in a chair, for she was trembling so violently that he feared if some support were not given her she must fall to the ground.

"Poor soul!" he said, at last, very gently and pitifully, for he guessed now that there must be some more than common cause for her agitation. "Poor soul!" he repeated, "only be calm, and I will tell you all I know, which is this, that Valentine Eyre's wife is alive and living in England with her children, who do not dream that she is their mother, because she came to them as governess, and under the name of Alingham—"

"But who was she? When did he marry her?" asked Blanche, tossed between hopes and fears which were equally cruel.

"Hush!" whispered the doctor, in low, cautious tones, "you forget our patient, for though he is unconscious, our voices may disturb him, and heighten the fever," and having given this warning the doctor went on to tell word for word the story of Valentine Eyre's hasty marriage with his cousin Celia de Nunaz, the unhappy misunderstandings which had arisen between the husband and wife, and lastly of the plot in which, against his better judgment, he had aided Celia, and on this the doctor dwelt long and bitterly, reproaching and upbraiding himself in the strongest terms for the part he had played.

"I do not blame poor Celia," said the doctor, in conclusion. "She was young and romantic and with her love her husband's happiness came before everything. In the whole of it she had not a selfish thought, and the worst to be said is that she made a great and grievous mistake; but I," he continued, sadly, "am bitterly to blame. I ought never to have yielded to her arguments and entreaties, and if I could not have dissuaded her from her rash folly, rather than consent to

such deception, I should have sent for her husband and revealed all."

"It would have been well had you done so," replied Blanche, and the despairing tones of her voice haunted her listener for many a day, neither could he ever forget the face which she lifted to his as she went on slowly, "It would have saved much sorrow and sin and vain sacrifice if all you ought to have done had been done; but I must not judge you nor anyone else," she continued, "only I know how that the evil consequences of falsehood never ends, and all atonement for sin is vain. Now, let us say no more, for there is only one thing to be done, and that is to send for Valentine Eyre's wife!"

"Yes," rejoined the doctor, "there is not a moment to be lost; but poor Celia has suffered all her life," he added, gently, "and you must not judge her harshly."

"Do you think I would dare to judge her at all?" murmured Blanche, with a heartbroken look. "I who have lived with remorse for twelve years! No; but I will go and pray with all my heart that he and she may be happy at last," and clasping her thin hands above her breast Blanche Hastings, now Sister Bertha for ever more, rose from her chair and glided from the room.

"I am an old man," murmured Dr. Maynard, as he gazed after her; "but I have never seen a nobler woman! She is of the stuff from which martyrs are made; but who'd have thought she suffered that saw her so calm and cold, as she always seemed? Truly," added the doctor, in broken tones, "it is most often by the fierce, cruel fires which burn unseen in our own breasts that we are purified at last."

After which Dr. Maynard carried out his intention of telegraphing for Valentine Eyre's wife; but as he wrote the words of the message he had not a hope that Celia would see her husband alive.

(To be continued.)





["GREAT HEAVENS!" CRIED THE COUNTESS. "IT IS YOU—CASSILIS?"]

NOVELETTE—concluded.]

## A TANGLED WEB.

### PART II.

—30—

#### CHAPTER I.

It was a very pale Mary that crept downstairs one February afternoon, leaning on Hannah's arm—so wasted, worn, and changed, with such hollows under the dark eyes, such a pitiful droop about the mouth, such little upright lines of pain and woe upon the broad, white brow. Even her hair was different, being cut close to the pretty head, and could Arthur have seen her then, he would scarcely have recognised in her the happy, smiling bride he had led out of that little sea-side church. She had loved and suffered; the love lay dead now, but the suffering was cruelly present. Of all her utter and perfect confidence in her adoring love for Arthur there remained now no least trace. She thought with horror of a life spent with him. Under no circumstances would she return to him; even his name she would wear no longer; it should be her endeavour to hide herself from him and the little world she had hitherto known.

Mr. Cassilis was waiting her in his usual sitting-room, which had been made a trifle more home-like in honour of Mary, and leading her to a couch made her lie down. Tears rose to the beautiful eyes, tears of gratitude and affection, for this man had indeed been a good Samaritan to her; he had taken her ungrudgingly into his home, had generously provided a nurse and doctor, he who hated that other folks should enter his house. He had accepted her simple story as truth without hesitation. He had been sorely tried, sorely wronged; his life had been full of bitterness and shame, so that this poor child appealed

peculiarly to all that was best and noblest in his nature. As the girl looked into his haggard face and saw the pity upon it, she lifted one hand gently in her own and kissed it, whilst her hot tears fell fast upon it.

"Why did you do that?" he demanded almost angrily.

"Forgive me, I could not help it! Oh, Mr. Cassilis, when I think of all you have done for me my heart is fain to burst with its load of gratitude. Tell me, what can I do to prove my thankfulness, to repay in some measure—some slight measure—all that I owe you?"

"Well, the first and best thing you can do is to behave reasonably; if you start crying like this you will soon undo all we have done. And besides that, I want to talk to you about yourself, not because I doubt you, but for your own ultimate good. I have made inquiries concerning your marriage, and find it is legal in every respect. You are in a position to compel Mr. Verral to acknowledge and support you as his wife."

"Oh!" she cried, in greatest agitation, "do not send me back to him! I will never live with him! I would die first!"

"You are exciting yourself needlessly. I have no intention of sending you back, or attempting in any way to control your future actions. But in justice to yourself you should bear your husband's name."

"I never will!" she answered proudly; "it matters so little now what people think of me. I would rather bear this unmerited shame all my life long than shelter myself under his name. He loved wealth and position better than honour or me; let him keep them!"

Oh, how changed she was when she could speak thus, she who had always been so gentle and submissive. Mr. Cassilis looked at her with a touch of admiration in his sunken eyes; then he said,—

"I have no right of control over you; you must please yourself in this thing; but I have been thinking over ways and means of helping

you, and when you are sufficiently recovered propose travelling down to Thurleywold to see this Miss Somborne, to whose care you were entrusted. Perhaps she knows more of your birth and antecedents than she would tell. Possibly you have influential friends who could give you material assistance."

"I wish I could think so; this mystery surrounding me is so hard to bear, so suggestive of evil."

"Or misfortune. On the other hand, if all our inquiries result in nothing, I am willing to accept your services as amanuensis until you find something better to do, or wish to leave me. Hush! do not speak yet. I have long been engaged on a botanical work; it has occupied me for years, and saved me from madness, but my sight fails me, and chance having thrown you in my way, the best thing I can do is to secure your services. And I once had a child, who, if living, would be about your age."

"She is dead?" Mary said very gently, and laid a sympathetic hand on his.

"Dead? Yes; ages and ages ago it seems to me. Mary, I wonder if you would care to hear my story? I have spoken of my past to none through all these weary years."

"If it is any help to you, in any way I can comfort you knowing your history, tell it me."

He hesitated a moment, and then, with his eyes fixed upon the fire, without any preface, he began,—

"I am a rich man, although from my style of living you would not suppose it; but I was not always wealthy. In fact, my income was very small, and my only real estate, this gloomy old house—not then so gloomy as now. But despite my comparative poverty I married very young; an old friend of my father's dying left his young daughter to my care."

"She was penniless and unfit to cope with the world, and I had not sufficient means to

provide her with a home only by marrying her, which eventually I did. She was very happy with me, poor child, and I was content. A year later a child was born to us, and we called it Barbara after its mother.

"I think I fairly worshipped the baby, and when, six months later, my wife died, little Barbara made my world. When she was two years old I had occasion to go to town, and there I met the woman who, of all the world, I was to choose for my wife.

"She was lodging in the same house as myself, and an intimacy quickly sprang up between us. She told me she was an orphan, all alone in the world, and earning a scanty livelihood by her needle. She was not even of my own rank, but she was very beautiful and fascinating, and soon friendship, (at least, with me), grew to love; such wild, idolatrous love as well might have touched any woman's heart.

"I asked her to become my wife. She knew I was a gentleman; she believed me rich, and so consented, and we were married as quickly as possible. Then I brought her down here. Never shall I forget her dismay and horror when she saw her new home, and learned that for all her beauty she was married to a man very little better off than the meanest artisan.

"In her passion she openly confessed that she did not love me, and never could; that she had long ago given her heart away. I was stunned with the heaviness of the blow. I had no word to say; but for all her perfidy and mad words my love did not change, although, Heaven knows, I would have hated her if I could.

"I cannot tell you of all the anguish I endured for months; of the dreadful scenes between us when mutual recriminations ever widened the breach she had made, or of my horror when I learned her systematic harshness to my little Barbara. She delighted to wound me through my child.

"Then when we had lived together six months I saw a change in her. She grew gay again, and took pleasure in her toilet. She began to take long walks alone, (as I believed), and told me cheerfully she had only just discovered the beauty of the country. She was kinder to little Barbara, and I thought that, the first bitterness of her disappointment over, she intended resigning herself to her lot, and making the best of matters.

"What a fool—what an arrogant fool I was! Just as I flattered myself that life was growing brighter I learned my wife was in the habit of daily meeting a young exquisite, lodging at Bodkin-sur-Clay. He had been her early lover, but although he had not courage to marry one so far beneath him socially, he did not scruple to spoil another man's home by robbing him of his wife.

"They fled together, and in my mad passion and anguish of shame I at once applied for a divorce. Of course I had no difficulty in obtaining it, but on the very day that the decree was known I received a letter from Jael, in which she threatened to be revenged on me for publicly putting her away; and although I scoffed at the threat she contrived to fulfil it. During a temporary absence from home she stole my child away!

He paused then, moved to strong agony; but in a moment recovered himself, and went on,—

"Through the culpable neglect of the nurse-maid little Barbara had wandered out upon the road, and Jael, (leaving about), seized her opportunity and carried off the child. Imagine my feelings when I returned. I think for a time I must have been mad, but when I came to myself I started in pursuit of Jael and her paramour.

"I did not come upon them for many weeks, and then when I burst into her presence wildly demanding my child, she coldly told me that she was dead. I would not believe it; but she led me to the quiet cemetery and showed me a tiny mound under which she said my Barbara lay, and in confirmation of

her words she pointed to the headstone, on which was engraved the two initials B. C. I had no further doubt, and cursing her, I left her presence.

"Since then I have not seen her. I do not know even if she lives. I lost all trace of her years ago. But since she left me I have lived here alone, sick to the heart of life and its manifold evils. Wealth came to me unexpectedly—of what value was it? What were honour and riches to me who had lost all? So I lived on here, without an interest in life, tortured always by my cursed love for a wicked woman, thinking always of what might have been, longing for a little comfort before death came to me a welcome guest."

"Let me be your comforter," Mary cried, impulsively, "your friend and servant. I will be very faithful to you. I will never forget what I owe you—all you have done—all I can never repay."

"Stay with me, dear child!" he answered, brokenly. "Our common sorrow should make us the best and truest of friends. And when you have found your relatives and hold an assured position in the world don't quite forget Philip Cassilis, the rustic, whose life you came to brighten for a little while."

"Whatever happens, I can never forget you. My own father could not be dearer to me than you!"

Day followed day, bringing fresh strength and vigour to Mary.

She was so tenderly cared for, both by Hannah and Mr. Cassilis, she was so surrounded by luxuries, that it had been strange, indeed, if her health were not restored.

And, when she was strong enough, Mr. Cassilis took her down to Turleywood, only to meet with a great disappointment. Miss Samborne had become bankrupt, and disappeared effectually, leaving no least clue to her place of refuge.

"Do not despair," Mr. Cassilis said; "in time we shall meet her; and, in the meantime, Mary, we will go abroad."

"Abroad! I thought you hated the idea of leaving your home?"

"I did; but you are imparting new life to me, and I think a change would be good for you; you are a very pale Mary still."

So Mr. Cassilis took Mary abroad, with old Hannah to act as maid and dressmaker; and, wherever they went, the Englishman and "his ward" were the cynosure of all eyes.

The man's face was too marked, too haggard and sombre, not to attract attention; and the girl, despite the deep shadows in her eyes, the proud reserve of her manner, the perfect self-possession strange in one so young, was too beautiful to escape notice.

A rich man Philip Cassilis commanded respect and attention, but his own personality had a great deal to do with the homage he received.

In those new scenes, in the varied round of pleasures so novel to her, Mary would have been happy indeed but for the memory of the past, that stood like a pale ghost between her and happiness. She felt herself a living cheat when men vied together to win her favour, and herself condemned that pride which forbade her to wear Arthur's name.

It was at Venice that she encountered Ronald. She was walking in the Great Square with Mr. Cassilis when suddenly she heard a familiar voice say sharply, "Mrs. Verral!" and, turning, found herself confronted by her old lover.

The meeting was so unexpected, she was so grateful to him, that he had no doubt of her truth and honour, so unfeignedly pleased to see the honest, kindly face again, that at first she could not speak, but her eyes gave the welcome her tongue refused to utter.

"How little I expected to meet you here!" the young man said; "and how pale you have grown! I am afraid you have been ill!"

"I was ill," she answered, finding her voice at last; "but I have long since recovered. Mr. Tempest, let me make you known to my

dear friend and master. Mr. Cassilis, this is the gentleman of whom I have told you."

The elder man looked keenly into the dark, honest face; then, putting out his hand, said cordially,—

"I am pleased to know you, Mr. Tempest, although I ought to hate and despise you, I suppose, for your relationship to Verral!"

"Hardly that, sir. You would not have me responsible for my cousin's sins and shortcomings?" smiling. "That would be poor justice!"

"Perhaps it would," and then, suddenly remembering an engagement, (which existed only in his imagination), he excused himself from sharing their society, and bidding Mary bring her friend back to luncheon, hurried away.

"That is just like his delicate forethought," said the girl, gently. "He fancied we might wish to talk together unobscured by the presence of a third party. He is most good to me!"

"What position do you occupy towards him?"

"I am supposed to be his secretary. But my place is a mere sinecure. Oh, Mr. Tempest, there is nothing I would not do for him, even, I think, to lay down my life! When I was homeless, friendless, stricken down with unmerited shame and bitterest agony of heart, he, who knew nothing of me, took me in, nursed me, fed me, clothed me—saved me from despair and death!"

She broke off suddenly, her face quivering with emotion, and there were tears in her beautiful eyes.

"He deserves your thanks and love!" Ronald said; "and with all my heart I say Heaven bless him! But, Mary, you did not behave fairly to me!"

"You mean—you mean I should have told you about my marriage? Arthur Verral forbade me to speak of it to any, and I never should have broken my promise, but I saw such shame and degradation before me that I had no alternative."

"No. You misunderstand. I mean that when this trouble came to you, you should have written me for help—I was your loyal friend—instead of which you ran off, no one knew where, and left me a prey to the bitterest anxiety. I tell you, Mary, I have had no rest day or night for thinking of you and your probable fate."

"Do not be angry with me. When I was expelled from the house I was mad, and did not so much as remember your existence. Afterwards—well, afterwards I wanted to hide myself from everyone I had known, and most of all from any one connected with—the Verral family, and I utterly refuse to wear his name or be recognised as his wife."

"Have you, then, ceased to care for him?" he asked.

"Heaven forgive me—he is my husband—yes!"

They were in the cathedral now, and there was none to see or hear; he took her hands in his.

"You poor, proud, unhappy child! What can I, what dare I say to you? O, Mary, Mary! if you had but loved me!"

"I know—I know," she cried, distressfully. "I mistook the glittering dress for gold, and am now bearing my punishment; but you must not speak to me again in such a manner. Remember that although he has disowned and cast me off, I am still his wife—Heaven help me—still his wife!"

Ronald loosed her hands, and drew a little from her; his face was very pale.

"You are right, Mary, I shall not transgress again."

"I want to thank you for your goodness, past and present; for your faith in my honour—it is strange you did not doubt me."

"I knew you too well; I knew, too, that your simplicity was your best safeguard. Mary, do you ever think of him?"

"I wish I did not. Have you seen him since that dreadful night?"



"Once," grimly. "He will not easily forget that meeting."

"Why?" in a quick, frightened way. "Did you quarrel about me?"

"No; I called him a scoundrel, and merely knocked him down. He won't lose the mark I gave him very quickly!"

"Oh! I wish you had not! I wish you had not! What good did it do? and perhaps I pity him—you see, he belongs to me!"

Ronald set his teeth savagely a moment, then said with a laugh,—

"I know it did me good. I was quite satisfied with the result. He went abroad directly after, and I have not seen him since."

"And Miss Dornston?"

"Oh! she showed herself a true woman. She protested her belief in your innocence, and the affection she entertained for him died a violent death. I hear she is all but engaged to a worthy young fellow."

"I am glad. She was always kind to me."

## CHAPTER II.

MR. CASSILLIS was so pleased with the young man's manner and conversation that he begged him, if possible, to join his little party.

"We are going to Milan," he said, "and if you have not visited the place you might be agreeably surprised with it."

Ronald knew the city as well as he did London, but he did not say so, so he gratefully accepted his new friend's invitation.

He felt he should be wiser not to run into temptation, but the pleasure of being with Mary, if only for a short time, was too great to be resisted.

He told himself he should never forget the fact that she was his cousin's wife, and laid down hard-and-fast rules for his own conduct.

But how horribly hard it was to remember and act upon them; how many, many times in the days that followed passionate words rose to his lips, and only by a supreme effort were not uttered.

How could he see such sweetness and grace without coveting it? He had loved her before Arthur had so much as seen her, and yet, and yet! oh! it was maddening to remember that he who had won her was blind to the beauty of her mind and character; afraid to claim her his.

"I would have won her on my bosom," Ronald said, paraphrasing the sweet words of Bobbie Burns. "She should have been more honoured than the proudest queen, more prized than all the treasures of the Indies. Mary, my Mary—that yet can can never be mine!"

The days followed each other in such swift succession that Ronald had been Mr. Cassilis' companion for more than three weeks, when he began to notice a slight and subtle change in Mary.

She was more like the lonely girl he had so pitied and wished to help; her self-possession was less marked, and at a word, or even a look she would start and tremble, blushing hotly over face and throat.

She was not nearly so frank with him as at first, in fact seemed rather to avoid him, and in her eyes there grew daily a wistful, troubled look.

And while he wondered and grieved over the change Mr. Cassilis watched both him and Mary with a growing pity for both.

He saw what Ronald was not vain enough to suspect; he marked the daily struggle Mary fought with herself, and as she had grown so dear to him, determined as far as possible to save her further trouble. And with this purpose in view, he spoke to Ronald.

"I take great blame to myself that I begged you to join us; I knew at once from your manner, and a certain reserve Mary showed in speaking of you, that you were once her lover. But I hoped that the knowledge of her

marriage would kill your love, and that her own sad experience would make her indifferent to all men. But I am afraid for you and for her."

"Sir, she does not care one jot for me; and I—if I love her—am at least honourable. Of what do you suspect or accuse me?"

"I neither suspect nor accuse you of evil, Tempest; but I am becoming daily convinced of the advisability of parting company."

"You would have me go at once, sir?"

Ronald said, in a very low voice.

"I think it best. I like and respect you very much, Tempest, and under different circumstances shall be heartily glad to see you again. And when you have thought it over you will acknowledge I was right."

"Perhaps; but it is hard lines. What am I to do with myself!"

"I understand you have a fine estate; why don't you go home and look after that? I know I am the last man in the world to give advice, having been so many years a recluse—but Mary has done me good, has lifted me out of self. And if that poor child can so bravely and patiently bear her own heavy cross, we who are men should not be behind in courage and strength."

"I will go," Ronald said, after a pause, "but you will at least let me wish her good-bye?"

"Yes, oh, yes! You will find her alone, now. When do you go?"

"To-night!" laconically, and he made his way to the room where Mary sat sewing. She looked up with a faint smile.

"You are early, Mr. Tempest!"

"Yes, I have a busy day before me, and only very little time to spend with you. I am going back to England to-night, Mary!"

She started, dropped her work, and stooping to gather it together said a little uncertainly,—

"Is not your decision rather sudden?" and when she looked up her face was a thought paler.

"Yes, it is sudden; but I have been talking the matter over with Mr. Cassilis, and he agrees with me that my duty is to my tenants, that they have been too long neglected. And now that I have found you, Mary, and am so confident I am leaving you in kind hands, there is nothing else for me to do here."

"I see," she answered, and rising walked to a window, and so stood, looking out with wide and anguished eyes. The truth had come to her at last, and with a great sick dread of herself she knew she loved this man, whilst yet she was bound to another—loved him as she never had and never could have loved Arthur.

"If a thing is to be done," Ronald said, joining her, and speaking very fast, "it is well to do it at once. I shall miss your pleasant society, and shall feel quite at a loss without Mr. Cassilis. But you would not bid me neglect my duty?"

"Oh, no," and still she did not look at him, still her hands plucked nervously at the lace about her throat, "you are right to go."

"Mary, how cold you are! Won't you say you are a little bit sorry to lose me? Don't you see that I must go if I would remain true to myself and to you? I did not mean to speak—I am doing wrong, I know—but I cannot bear you should misjudge me or think I am failing in loyalty and affection. Dear, it is because I love you too well that I am leaving you so suddenly; because if I stay I shall forget all, (as a man); I should remember. Do not you see—do not you see how this daily, hourly struggle against my passion is too great for me?—bid me go!"

She turned to him then, and as she lifted her beautiful, agonised eyes to his shudderingly, he read the truth. She loved him, and was lost to him. So they stood one moment regarding each other miserably and ashamedly, then with a groan he said,—

"I must go!"

"Yes," was all she whispered back, and looking on the pallor of her face, he thought

that she would faint. Taking her gently by the hands he half-leg, half-carried her to a couch and compelled her to sit down.

Then, as the heavy lids closed, and the shuddering, half-swooning girl fell amongst the pillows, he said,—

"I am going, my dear, won't you say good-bye and Heaven bless you?" but Mary could not speak, she only held out her hand to him in token of farewell.

"Forgive me that I have given you pain—forgive me and forget me," he said, and bending he kissed her once upon the brow, and so was gone. Then the poor child with a quick, half-suppressed cry of anguish, covered amongst the cushions weeping as though her heart would break.

A little later Mr. Cassilis found her lying pale and still upon the couch. In a glance he knew all, and bending over her said, almost with a woman's tenderness,—

"Mary, I know all; oh, you poor child, you poor child! That your life should be so wrecked in its early morning."

"Oh, don't pity me!" she sobbed. "I am a wicked, wicked woman. I ought to have remembered my wifehood—but I saw daily how good, how noble he was, and contrasting him—with my husband—I learned to love him before I ever dreamed that I was sinning. Do not send me away, dear friend! Heaven knows I shall suffer all my life for this my sin."

Philip Cassilis sat down by her, and putting an arm about her, said,—

"Trust me as you might have trusted your father; confide in me fully, my poor, unhappy child; and remember that whatever comes Philip Cassilis will hold you dear. Will it ease your heart and lighten your burden to know that you have been as a ministering angel to me, and that if my child had lived I should have wished her to be all that I find you?"

"You are good, oh, most good!" the girl cried; but I fear you say these kind words to make me forgetful of my folly and wrongdoing. Why do you not blame me? I deserve that you should be angry."

"No; oh, no, Mary! I cannot wonder that Ronald should have found favour with you—he is worthy of you. But I am surprised that you should have preferred that scoundrel—his cousin—to him."

"Don't you understand how it was? I had never had anyone to love me, and Arthur was always seeking me—he was so kind and good to me in those days, and Ronald was never ready with words. I did not even dream he loved me until he confessed it, and so—and so, I learned to love his cousin. If you saw him you would hardly wonder at my infatuation—he is so blithe and handsome, and has such winning ways. How could I dream of such a bitter ending to our love!"

"How indeed! And now, Mary, you must try to put him out of your thoughts, to forget the past, and learn to possess your soul in patience. To-morrow, child, we will start for Switzerland. Amongst new faces and new scenes you will be happy once again."

"Oh, yes, I shall be happy!" but her faint smile hurt him more than many tears.

So they went to Switzerland, and at Chamounix Mary was greatly disturbed by meeting her old governess, Miss Samborne.

She was travelling with an invalid lady, in the capacity of companion, and seeing the elegance of Mary's toilet, the air of wealth which pervaded all of Mr. Cassilis' belongings, she greeted her ex-pupil effusively.

In the hope of learning something of his favourite's parentage, Mr. Cassilis was extremely polite to the grim woman, and begged her to join their little excursion the following day, an invitation which she accepted with avidity.

"I am afraid we shall have no enjoyment," thought Mary, as she toiled along behind Mr. Cassilis and Miss Samborne. "It is wicked, I know; but I hate that woman, and I cannot forget all she used to make me suffer—all the petty indignities she inflicted upon me."

And just as her thoughts reached this stage Mr. Cassilis turned and called her.

"Mary, come here, I have something to tell you, or rather, Miss Samborne has." Scrambling up beside them the girl asked, "What is it, Miss Samborne?"

"I have met the lady who brought you to me, but she has another name now. She is staying with a party of friends at Geneva, and is known as the Countess Loria."

"The Countess Loria!" echoed Mary, in a startled tone. "That woman! She hated me, but she has another name now. She is staying with a party of friends at Geneva, and is known as the Countess Loria."

"Now, now, Mary, you are trembling like a leaf! and is it likely a mother would be willing to relinquish all claim to her child, and to finally cast her out, friendless and penniless, upon the world?"

"I have heard of mothers who have done worse things than that."

"Indeed, yes," said Miss Samborne, briskly, "but, really, Mary, I think you are raising a bugbear when you have no occasion to do so. I am quite sure the Countess is not your mother. There isn't the least look of her about you. She is such a very handsome woman (this with a malicious wish to wound Mary, for her chilly manner to herself), and she did not speak of you with any affection."

"Never mind about that!" broke in Mr. Cassilis. "The most important question is, did the Countess Loria recognise you, Miss Samborne?"

"Oh, no; how should she, when so many years have passed since she came to me, and I was always insignificant in appearance, whilst she was the handsomest young woman I had ever seen. It was not easy to forget her."

"Thank you; and if your information is as valuable as I believe it is, I shall beg you to permit me to show my gratitude in a substantial manner," said Mr. Cassilis, with old-fashioned politeness.

"You are too kind, sir; and I am sure I hoped for no reward, and wished for none. Why, Mary, how melancholy you look!"

"I am thinking," answered Mary, "that this wretched ignorance of my real station is better than a terrible certainty."

"Mary!" remonstrated her friend, "you are on the old subject, and I forbid it." And at evening he said, "put your things together, my dear. To-morrow we start for Geneva!"

"Oh, Mr. Cassilis! you cannot mean it!"

"I can, and do! I am resolved to get to the bottom of this affair; who knows but I shall discover in you some fine lady?"

"Don't!" she said; "your words sound so much like—like Arthur's, when I told him my story. Oh, I shall be glad enough if only I find myself the child of honest working people."

"I prophesy you will find yourself something better than that! Good-night, my dear, get to bed as early as you can."

In the morning they started for Geneva, and having passed a busy day amongst the pretty, minute shops, and the queerly-named streets, returned to their hotel, only to start on their search the following day with renewed vigour.

Mr. Cassilis conducted Mary to the lake front; and walking slowly along before the numerous jewellery shops, led her to a seat by a little table, and began to amuse her by queer criticisms on the passers-by. But suddenly he saw her face grow pale, and her hand flutter to her heart, there to be pressed fiercely as though to still its beating.

"Look!" she said, in a breathless way, "it is my husband!"

And obeying, Mr. Cassilis saw a young man coming slowly towards them; as yet he had not seen them, and the elder man had plenty of time to scan his features and take his moral measurements.

Could that be Arthur? So jaded and worn, with his clothes hanging limply around him, and a general air of dissipation wholly pervading him. Arthur's beauty had always been of a very material type, and dependent solely

upon his rich colouring and vivacious expression.

But now the gold of his hair seemed dimmed, the flush of health on his cheek had faded, and his eyes were less bright than before; he walked carelessly and languidly.

"Your husband! that fellow!" was what Philip Cassilis said. "Mary!"

"He was not always so. Oh! dear friend, even I can pity him now, he used to be so bonny! Let us get away before he sees us!"

But she had spoken too late; the young man's languid eyes had turned wearily towards her; now they suddenly brightened, his face flushed into life and colour, and he made a forward step.

"Mary!" She shrank back from him, and her companion placing himself beside her, said, haughtily,—

"What do you want with this lady?" "Only a few minutes' private conversation; don't be hard upon me! Mary, tell him who I am, and grant me an interview!"

"This is Mr. Arthur Verral!" the girl answered, coldly. "Will you wait for me, please, whilst I hear what he has to say?"

"But this is no place for private conversation!" Arthur said, earnestly.

"We will walk by the lake, Mr. Verral! You can speak to me there; and I will go no further!"

"Are you afraid of me, Mary?"

"Afraid! no!" she said with immeasurable contempt in look and voice; "but since we parted, Mr. Verral, I have learned to think first and most of my own good name!"

"How hard you are!" he retorted. "You don't seem to think of the strait I was in when—when I—"

"When you repudiated me?" calmly. "Oh, yes, I do! And because I knew this and felt how vain and foolish I was to lean upon you, I left you to your own devices; be as good to me! We are far better apart!"

"Do you mean, Mary," he demanded, blankly, "do you mean you never loved me?"

"I wish I could say that, I should be spared much self-scorn; but I loved you then with all the wild, unreasoning passion a young girl too often feels. I was your wife, your slave; but in the hour when you cast me aside you killed my love!"

"No, Mary, no! You were too true to change!"

She laughed bitterly. "Was I? Well, all that is altered now; I am what you made me! Tell me, now, what it is you want of me!"

He stood a moment looking down into the depths of the glittering lake; then he said,—

"Whatever you may believe of me, Mary, I have always loved you, and I've gone to the bad ever since you left me. You should not have been so violent and rash; I would have found some way in which to help you without endangering your prospects or mine."

Her lip curled scornfully. "But you would care nothing how the breath of scandal touched your wife's name!"

"I was bound hand and foot; but the matter is more amenable now. She is a little bit frightened by the change in me, and no doubt would at once consent to receive you as my wife."

But Mary drew herself up proudly.

"Arthur Verral, your mother drove me from her house once, with vile and cruel words; and you were so cowardly you dare not stand by me; for aught you knew or cared I might have died by the road-side!"

"Oh, no, no! I was sincere in my love; but you know my weakness—I am a cowardly villain! But come back to me, my Mary, and I will call you wife before the whole world!"

She shrank, shuddering from him; and yet a great compassion stirred her soul as she marked the paleness of his tremulous lips, the changed and aged face; so that she said more gently than she had yet spoken,—

"You have made that impossible, I shall never return to you!"

"But I can compel you!" he broke out in impotent wrath.

"You may try!" she answered, with quiet scorn. "But I do not think the laws of our country would sanction such compulsion. If they would, I can only say, my refuge from you would be the nearest pond or river."

"Do you hate me so much? Oh, wife! wife! you loved me dearly once?"

She made an involuntary gesture as though to cover her face, then remembering they were not unobserved, controlled herself.

"Arthur, we can never be anything to each other now; but I will try not to think too harshly of you, and I will never trouble you again. Now I must go. This interview is painful, and Mr. Cassilis will be tired of waiting."

"But you will see me again? Give me a chance to combat your resolution?"

"No; I hope this is our last meeting!"

"Mary, stay! Who is this Mr. Cassilis?"

And at the implied insult in his look and voice, she answered hotly,—

"My employer—the best and noblest of men. He saved me from starvation and death when my husband cast me out!" And with these words she was gone.

### CHAPTER III.

THE Countess Loria sat in her own room chatting affably to Mrs. Verral, who looked much older than when, eight months ago, she sent poor trembling Mary adrift. Now and again the elder lady glanced anxiously from the window, complaining that Arthur was late.

"How you worry about that son of yours!" said the other. "Surely he is old enough to look after himself! Pah! how hot it is!" and she began languidly to fan herself.

"You forget, dear Jael, all about that *fiasco* of his? I shall never be easy until Arthur is really married to some nice girl!"

"Of course you never took the trouble to inquire if Mary Gresham's story was true?" questioned the Countess, with an odious smile.

"Jael! as if Arthur would be so mad! Though at times I am tempted to believe it would have been better to allow the marriage. He certainly was devoted to her."

"And yet he permitted her to be driven like an outcast from the Manor? Truly, men are strange creatures," murmured the Countess, scoffingly.

"A gentleman to see you, madam," announced a trim waiting-maid.

A gentleman! Did he not send up his card?" cried the Countess, jumping up and beginning to smooth her hair, and arrange the folds of her dress.

"No, madam. He said it was useless."

"Very well, Elias, you may show him up. Probably some stupid tradesman." And once again Jael, Countess Loria, sank back amongst her cushions, only to start erect as a tall man entered the room, followed by a shrinking girl.

"Great Heavens!" she cried; it is you—Cassilis!"

He was no less staggered than she, for a moment; but quickly recovering himself, he said,—

"So I have found you at last, woman! and in you discover the Mrs. Montpensier who stole away my child—the woman who ruined my life and happiness!"

It was a bold move, and it succeeded.

"That will do," the Countess interrupted, swiftly. "Your story is not so happy that you need publish it to all my friends. I did steal away your child. I swore to be revenged on you, and I was. I hated her, because she was so much to you—reminded you so forcibly of the wife you remembered as better and worthier than I. I heard of your accession



to wealth, and I swore that child should never enjoy it!"

"Oh, Heaven! that such a fiend should wear so beautiful a guise!"

"You are complimentary, monsieur!" with a mocking reverence. "I obtained possession of your darling, and placed her with a worthy woman. (You cannot deny that I have had her education most carefully attended to); and although I never wrote to, or visited her, I kept myself well apprised of her movements. At last I learned she had gone out into the world to a life of drudgery. Later still I became acquainted with her employer, and through my information she was cast adrift again. Philip Cassilis, you sowed the wind, and reaped the whirlwind. Had I spoken, your child would have been fêted and made much of by my very estimable friend here. She was an heiress, and money covers a multitude of sins; but I held my peace. And now estranged from her husband, loathing him as she must, where will you find happiness for her?"

"Woman, I loved you—Jael, I love you still! but Heaven forgive you your sin against me and mine, I never can!" Then he turned to the pale and wondering girl. "Mary, come to me, my child! my child! so loved and so longed for through all these weary years! Do not you hear, love? Have you no word for me, your father?"

He took her in his arms and kissed the clay-cold lips; and, looking into the sweet face dead to him from the first, but never so dear as now, he saw that she had fainted.

In the confusion that followed the Countess made her escape, and was soon posting in hot haste to Turin.

It was very long before Mary's eyes opened, and Mrs. Verral, struck with self-anger, fustily assisted to restore her. And when at last the girl sat erect, she would have kissed her, but Mary thrust her away.

"Not you!" she said; "I could not bear it! Mr. Cassilis, are you there?"

"My darling, yes!"

"Will you please tell me all that has happened? My head is dazed!"

"Your identity is established. You are Barbara Mary Cassilis!"

"You are my father—my own father?"

"Yes, sweetheart, yes!"

She threw her arms about his neck.

"Oh, Heaven be thanked! Never did a daughter love her father as I love you!"

"My dear, my dear, control yourself! you are making yourself ill!"

"No! no! He—my husband—had no reason to be ashamed of me?"

"None, child, none! By birth and wealth you are his superior!"

"Take me away! I am satisfied!" she murmured, but Mrs. Verral darted forward.

"Why did you not insist that your claim should be made good? Dear child, you wronged yourself, and placed me in a false position!"

Mary looked at her with ineffable scorn.

"I should then have ruined my husband. Madam, I loved him once, and for his sake I sacrificed myself; now, all that I ask of you is to let me go my way alone and unmolested."

"But the poor boy loves you. He is anxious to atone for all the past!"

"My life shall be spent henceforth with and for my father. Mr. Arthur Verral has no claim upon me!"

"You mistake," said a hoarse and agitated voice behind them; "I have the first and greatest claim. I am your husband!"

"You had better try and enforce it!" Philip Cassilis said, grimly. "You will find me ready and willing to contest it. But Miss Cassilis is worn out with the events of the day; permit us to take our leave now. You know where to find me should you wish an interview. Mary, my dear, come!"

Without a word or look to mother and son she went out with her new-found parent, walking in a blissful dream; and safe in their own apartment she fell on her knees beside him, saying,—

"My father! my father! Heaven help me to console you for the past!"

And the next day came Arthur, so pale and haggard, such a sorry wraith of the old Arthur that Mary could but pity him.

Mr. Cassilis saw him first, but what passed between them none ever knew, only Arthur came out from that interview looking more than ever like a whipped cur.

As he stood in the open doorway, so agitated and tremulous, so uncertain of his welcome, Mary rose.

"You wish to see me?" she said. "Please come in and close the door, there are servants about."

Obediently he in a mechanical kind of way, he advanced to the centre of the room.

"Your father has given me permission to see you once more—just to say good-bye. Oh, Mary! think what that means for me? When I leave you to-day it will be as though I were dead to you."

"It is better so," she said with gentle coldness, "much better."

"It may be for you, but never for me. Don't you see, Mary, all you could make of me? Look what I have become since you left me, and he held out a hand that trembled as if with palsy. "I am going fast to the dogs, and only you can pull me up! Won't you be my guide and support?"

"You are strangely reversing the order of things; it is the wife who looks for guidance and support. No, Arthur, I bear you no malice, though indeed I well might, seeing how you have spoiled all my life, and shaken my faith in the good and pure, but I cannot, I dare not return to you, it would only make bad worse!"

"You would not be so hard to move," he cried, violently, "if you did not already love some other fellow."

Her face flushed, and a shamed look leapt into her eyes, but she said, proudly,—

"Even if I do, the fault is yours. But you have no right to insult me, and I shall not endure it!"

He looked at her in amazement.

"Mary, dear Mary, I hardly know what I say in the tumult of my feelings. Oh! sweetheart! wife! let your mind linger a little upon the past and see then if all your old love is dead, if not one little trace of tenderness for me remains. We were so happy then—you and I. There was neither doubt nor fear in our hearts, and you said I made your world. You cannot forget."

She twisted her hands together in an agony of pity for him and herself; and her voice was broken as she said,—

"Yes, we were happy then as we never can be again. I am changed, cruelly changed—and you—oh! you poor soul! you will not find it hard to forget me. There is a wonderful verse of a wonderful poem present with me which aptly tells my feelings. Listen, Arthur, and learn from it how vain your pleadings are:

"Since thou art not as these are, go thy ways,  
Thou hast no part in all my nights and days,  
Lie still, sleep on, be glad as such things be,  
Thou couldst not watch with me."

And as the faltering, pitiful but unloving voice died out the unhappy young man threw himself at Mary's feet and grovelled there, grasping her skirts with trembling, eager hands.

"Wife! wife! I could compel you to come to me, but I only entreat. Bear with my weakness, think only of my love! I can win you back, I know, only give me time and opportunity. Dear, I never loved you so well as now, when the dread of a final parting shows me all my heart. I will serve you, worship you, love you all the days of my life—"

"Oh! hush! hush! I cannot listen to you. This is too cruel!" and the tears were coursing down her pale cheeks. "Arthur, Heaven forgive me if I do wrong, but not now can I return to you. But—but—if you are

patient, if you will show by your life that you really love me, mean all that you say, I will pray for strength to do my duty. Oh! no, do not thank me! You cannot tell what is in my heart—and it will be hard, indeed, for me to keep the promise I now make. I am happier with my father—my dear and honoured father, than I can ever be away from him."

"No, no!" he said, and caught her hand and kissed it; then he said, "You will not try me too far, Mary. Make the time of my probation short. Come to me with Christmas, my dear wife, and let us begin the new year together."

"You must wait a year," she answered, firmly. "That will pass all too quickly—and even then, if I feel the sacrifice is too great for me, I do not hold myself bound to make it."

But he was hopeful. His face flushed and his eyes grew radiant until he was more like the Arthur she once had loved.

"You must not forbid me to hope," he said, springing to his feet. "I know your gentle heart better than you yourself do; and when I am away the memory of this hour and my pain will linger with you until you are moved to a passion of pity—and pity, they say, is akin to love."

She looked at him with mournful earnestness.

"I shall disappoint you," she said, with conviction. "I am not the woman you loved!"

But he would not hear her. He began to pray her sometimes to send him "a line to cheer the weary while of waiting," but on this point Mary was obdurate.

"No; let there be perfect silence between us. Let there be nothing to remind you of me. That will be the best test of your constancy. And I am afraid, very much afraid, my father will be displeased at the concession I have made. Naturally he resents the treatment I received."

"I know it," grimly. "I have been feeling the force of his resentment pretty strongly. Mary," as she rose, signifying the interview was ended, "you aren't going to send me away just yet?"

"Yes, you must go. There is nothing more to say. Good-bye."

"Good-bye, if you will have it so. Kiss me once, my darling!"

She shrank shuddering from him, but the next moment lifted her face and permitted him to kiss her upon the mouth; and when the door had closed upon him she sank in a heap upon the floor, moaning,—

"Oh! dear Heaven! I cannot, cannot bear it! His body and soul—oh! it is too terrible, too terrible!"

That same day Mrs. Verral called, but Mary utterly refused to see her.

"She, at least, has no claim upon me," she said, bitterly, "and I want quiet," so that lady retired discomfited, but by no means vanquished.

Most industriously she circulated the news of her son's marriage to the beautiful heiress, Miss Cassilis, whose story was so romantic, adding that Mr. Cassilis was so annoyed to discover his daughter was married that he had forbidden her to hold any intercourse with Arthur until after she had attained her majority.

When Mr. Cassilis heard that he was highly incensed.

"The woman has no sense of shame, no delicacy of feeling!" he said, angrily, "and I am thinking that when she was born truth was an exile from the earth."

Mary had turned very pale at this item of news, and now, leaning over her father, she said,—

"Dear, let us go back to England, we shall be happier there. Oh! I meant to make your life so pleasant, and I have brought you only trouble and worry."

"I would welcome both worry and trouble

just to know I have you safe, and if it pleases you to go home, we will start at once."

So turning their backs upon strange scenes they looked steadfastly towards England; but Mr. Cassilis did not intend taking his daughter back to Lorne Croft, where everything would serve to remind both of the bitter past and their own wretched stories.

He had purchased, through an agent, a pretty villa on the banks of the Thames, near to Twickenham; and here he installed Mary as mistress.

Every conceivable luxury surrounded her now. Her father delighted to shower gifts upon her, and folks, partly knowing her story, made much of her, and wondered amongst themselves over the intense sadness which darkened her eyes and dimmed her beauty.

Of Arthur she heard often, but never from him; and report said he had "turned over a new leaf," and was living the life of a Portman.

She was glad to know he was arrested in his downward career, but wished with all her heart that it had been any other influence than hers which brought about this much-desired change.

The Countess had gone to Algeria, where still later she married a French officer, to his ultimate discomfiture, and no one remained in England to torment her save Mrs. Verral, who, following closely on the Cassilis track, settled near them for a season, and did her level best to bring about a reconciliation.

But Mary held aloof. She had been more than human to feel friendship for the woman who had so vilely insulted her, so cruelly thrust her out upon the world; though indeed Mrs. Verral's harshness had been the means of restoring her to her father.

So the weeks and months wore by, and November came with its fogs and chill winds. The little villa was not so pleasant now, in fact the surrounding scenery had such a depressing effect on Mary that Mr. Cassilis seriously thought of carrying her off to some more congenial place.

But she had such a dread of meeting either Arthur or Ronald that she begged to remain where she was, and against his judgment her father yielded, (as he always did), to her entreaties.

She was sitting playing the soft melodies he loved to hear one night towards the close of November, when she suddenly paused, hearing hasty steps along the gravel path.

"Who can it be, father?" she said, starting up nervously, for little things shook her now.

"Oh! what a violent peal!" as the bell was pulled so sharply as to threaten damage. "Something dreadful is about to happen!"

And even as she spoke she heard a servant say firmly,—

"I really cannot admit you, madam, it is against my orders. Miss Cassilis has forbidden it. Disobedience means loss of my situation."

"But," cried a shrill, weeping voice, "this is a matter of life and death. She will surely not carry her enmity to me so far as to deny me speech with her now! Go to her; say Mrs. Verral is here, imploring her, as she values her future peace and happiness, to see her just this once!"

Mr. Cassilis stepped into the hall.

"Mrs. Verral, what have you to say? You may safely confide your message to me."

She rushed blindly past the servant, and staggering towards Mr. Cassilis, wailed,—

"My son, my son; he is dying, and begs his wife, for the love of Heaven, to go to him!"

"Is this a ruse?" the man demanded, sternly.

"Oh, no! no! as true as Heaven is above me, my boy is dying—think of it; my bonny Arthur. I was cold to him and hard, often—but I loved him more than all the world, and now he will never know it!"

"Tell me all, hide nothing from me!" said a quiet voice, and with a start Mr. Cassilis found Mary beside him. She was white as

the first pure flock of snow, and her eyes shone like stars; but she spoke calmly, and stood there, firm and composed, although her hands were so closely interwoven that her rings wounded the soft fair flesh.

"Forget my wrongs against you," cried Arthur's mother, grasping her by the arm, "remember only he is at death's door, and is crying for you; here is the telegram. It happened at Cheddar. He was always daring, and he ventured too near the edge of the cliffs, some loose stones gave way, and he fell to the ground. There is no hope of recovery, his back is broken. Oh, how can I bear to tell you this? Oh, my heart! oh, my heart! what shall I do!"

Just a moment Mary stood still, and she thought of Arthur with a pity that was almost divine. All thought of his cowardice and sin fell from her then, and she remembered him only as he was in those first days of their love, when hope and faith were with them. Her lips quivered, her head sank low, as she cried: "Take me to him, father, he is my husband, and oh, for the love of Heaven I do not let him die unsatisfied."

"Get your cloak and come; Mrs. Verral, you had better travel with us. You are unfit to take so long a journey alone."

Then forcing her to drink some wine, they waited together for Mary's coming. The wretched woman clung weeping to her. "For his sake forgive me!"

"I do forgive you! You have enough to bear without my anger!"

#### CHAPTER IV.

Very pale and changed, Arthur lay supine upon his bed, and it was easy indeed to see that the end was very near. Oh! it was pitiful to be struck down thus, in the pride of his manhood, and when life was once again full of hope. Poor, weak vacillating Arthur. How little he had dreamed of such an end to his story. He had hoped in the near future to prove his love and his contrition to the utmost, and now his chance was gone, and the bitterest thought of these bitter hours was that Mary would always remember his sin against her, that she never could think of him with anything approaching pity or tenderness.

But now in this time of trial and terrible bodily anguish all that was good and strong in him came to the fore. Suffering untold tortures, he yet uttered no complaint, and neither cry nor moan broke from the pale lips. The woman at the cottage where he lay and his patience was wonderful, and looked on with dim eyes at the fast changing, fading beauty.

The door opened, and as the dying face was turned eagerly towards it, a look of sudden wild rapture lit it up, for there stood Mrs. Verral, and behind her, pale, pitiful, fearful, was Mary, his wife, his darling. He stretched out his hand to her, and running forward she fell on her knees beside him, laid her cheek to his and sobbed, "Oh, Arthur! Arthur! this is terrible!"

"You are sorry for me?" he asked in a low and eager voice. "You are not glad to think you will so soon be rid of me?"

"Oh, no, no dear!" moved to passionate tenderness by the change she saw in him, the agony she knew he was enduring so stoically. "How can you believe me so cruel?" But see, Arthur, your mother is here!"

"Poor mother, it is hard for you," he said, as she came forward, weeping wildly, "but I've been a sore trouble to you often, and Minnie and Dot will comfort you for my loss."

"Can they ever supply your place—ever be to me what you have been? I was so proud of you, my son, my son! so ambitious for you, and perhaps—perhaps if I had been less so you would have been spared to bless my old age."

"Hush! mother!" he said very gently, "you are making yourself ill, and it troubles me to see you thus. I have not much time left me, and there is much I want to say. I would

like to know that when I am gone you and Mary will be great friends—friends in the best and noblest sense of the word. She has suffered much at my hands; I wronged her as few men have ever wronged women, and yet all the while I loved her with a whole heart. When she left me life seemed over for me. I did not care what came. I only felt I had lost her for ever—rightly punished I was—but my punishment was greater than I could bear."

"Husband! husband! I too have sinned. I should have been more forgiving," sobbed Mrs. Verral, and kissed the poor, pale mouth.

"So I thought once, but not now. What forgiveness could there be for such a cowardly sin as mine? Dearest and best, dying eyes see clearly, and I know now that I never could have made you happy; never could have satisfied your nobler and higher nature. You would have known this, too, had our intercourse been that of ordinary married people—you would have weighed me in the balance and found me wanting. Poor Mary, poor wife, you deserted a better fellow than me."

"Do not distress yourself," she pleaded earnestly, "all is forgiven."

He lay silent a little while, a smile lingering about his lips; it was so good to hear her near, to hear her speak in such tender tones, that death was robbed of its sting, and a wonderful happiness flooded the fleeting soul.

"Matted and damp were the curls of gold," which Mary, with a gentle hand, brushed from the low brow, and in the eyes there was stealing a dim, far-away look, telling too plainly how near the end was.

With a smile of ineffable sweetness—a smile which for a moment restored him all his youth and comely beauty—he turned to his mother.

"Dear, you have loved me well, borne with my follies patiently, hardly ever denied me any gift, any wish. You will promise me now to love my Mary, to be good to her for my sake; and Mary, on her part, will vow to bury the past, and try to comfort you in your desolation. Give me your hands," and as each obeyed him he laid Mary's little slender fingers in his mother's plumper palm; and the girl, leaning across the bed, kissed the weeping woman in token of her faith.

Very pale and quiet Arthur lay with that smile still lingering about his mouth, and Mary's little hand still clasping his. Then, suddenly, he said,—

"Mother, it is not my wish that Mary should live alone, for my sake, all her life. If there is any one who can make her happy, and to whom she can look with loving reverence, remember that it was to my wish she should give him all I forfeited; and do not visit your displeasure upon her. I would like Minnie and Dot to see her often, to grow more and more like her with each passing year."

"Not one wish of yours shall be gainsaid, not one command disregarded," faltered Mrs. Verral; "the girl who could inspire such love and such esteem must be wholly worthy even of you."

Later, when husband and wife were left alone together, he turned to her with a very wistful expression in his eyes.

"Dear, do you remember some wild words of mine spoken at Geneva, when I said that unless you loved some other man you would have been less hard to move to forgiveness?"

"I remember," she said, faintly, and her head dropped low.

"It was true, dear Mary? You had learned to think of some one else?"

"Heaven forgive me, yes!" and hiding her face she wept aloud.

"Hush! hush! dear heart, your secret will soon be buried with me; but tell me his name, and if he loves you too!"

"Oh, Arthur! Arthur! You break my heart! You make me ashamed through all my being! I should have kept stricter watch and ward over my heart; but he was so noble, so good to me in my trouble."

"Yes, yes, Mary! but I want to know his name."

—GAYNE MID.



"Cannot you guess? Arthur, Arthur! he always loved me, even before you saw me!"

"It is Ronald, then? Heaven be thanked; he will make you happy, and I shall die content. You will be safe and satisfied with him!"

"Do not speak of these things now," she pleaded, brokenly.

"It is best I should; you will then have no anxious thoughts in the future, nothing with which your tender conscience may reproach you. Mary, darling, I am very happy!"

And then the room grew deathly in its stillness, and Mary sat holding her husband's hand, watching his whitening face, listening to his fainting, failing breath.

And at last the end came; she saw it, and rising, called his mother; then bent over him, supporting him in her arms.

The blue eyes opened wide upon her face, the pallid lips sought to smile, but failed sadly; and the dying voice panted,—

"Heaven bless you, sweet!"

And when Mrs. Verral, falling on her knees, shrieked out, "Arthur! Arthur! say goodbye to me, your mother, your wretched mother!" he spoke her name once with love and pity; then turning to the pale girl, pleaded,—

"Pray—for—me!"

But, before her prayer was ended, he fell back amongst his pillows, and so was dead.

They carried all that remained of Arthur back to Childesthorpe, where they laid him with his forefathers; and the funeral was of the grandest description. The whole county united, not so much to do honour to the "young dead," but to testify to the widow its sympathy with her in all her trials and griefs.

Mary was shaken to the soul by this tragic ending of her married life; and, so full of pity for her young husband's untimely fate that she had not thought for Ronald, who was not present. Minnie was there in irreproachable mourning, and wearing a conventional look of woe, whilst Dot, the most lovable of the sisters—the most like Arthur in face and disposition, clung to Mary's skirts weeping wildly.

Yes, it was all over now—the doubts and fears and longings. Arthur was at rest, and his young wife free to bless Ronald with her love. But she did not remember this as she was driven towards the Manor with Mrs. Verral, who, throwing herself on her breast sobbed,—

"Do not leave me yet, my home is desolate and my heart broken, because he loved you, stay with me, Mary—there is no one else to whom I can turn!"

So Mary remained with her whilst the leaves fell from the trees, and the lovely land grew bare and dreary—stayed with her through the gloomy Christmas when no visitors came to their doors, and old memories thronging about them, only intensified the gloom and wretchedness surrounding them.

Then she returned to the little villa by the Thames, once more to gladden her father's heart.

#### CHAPTER V.

ONE might have hoped that now indeed a happy time was dawning for the lovers; but Ronald was away in the wilds of Africa, and knew nothing of his cousin's death and Mary's freedom. He had joined a research party, their object being to discover the fate of a gallant officer who had penetrated the interior of that dark continent, supported only by a handful of men.

Reports said he and his little band had been cruelly massacred by a barbarous tribe; but this Colonel Mawson, the leader of the second party, would not believe, and he so worked upon the feelings of Ronald Tempest and a few gallant young fellows that they freely offered to go out with his small company.

To tell the hardships they endured, the strains to which they were often reduced, would fill a huge volume; but such was the dis-

pline exercised, the courage existing in those strong English hearts, that not a man of them complained or rebelled. One by one the gallant soldiers drooped and died, and their comrades laid them to rest in jungle, plain, or desert, sometimes beside the highroad.

Still they pressed on, fainting often with hunger and thirst, worn out with night watches and the weary tramp by day, long, long, oh! so vainly, for a glimpse of the blue hills and verdant slopes of their own well-favoured land.

They met with adverse tribes, who robbed them when they could, and troubled to them when the featureless white faces flashed upon them in anger and defiance, when the sinewy hands took firm grip of their weapons and pointed with murderous intent. At last the little band came to a kraal where they had heard Captain Ayherst and his party were held in close captivity. What a handful it was they found! Only six out of forty-eight men survived to tell the tale of their sufferings, and they were so wasted and worn, so bowed down by their accumulated sorrows, that they bore scarcely any resemblance to the gallant soldiers who had gone out so gay and confident of heart. The chief spoke Colonel Mawson's party very fairly, offering to release their countrymen for a trifling consideration, and bidding them welcome, placed several huts at their disposal.

Exhausted as they were, the men were thankful to get a night's rest without the fear of a hostile tribe, or some wild animal of wood or desert breaking in upon their slumbers. But when they awoke in the morning and attempted to leave their huts they found themselves surrounded by a native regiment of fine, stalwart fellows, and knew with a heart-sick throbbing that they were entrapped.

How vain it was to rage and fume—to call down curses on the heads of their treacherous entertainers! Vainer still to refuse those tasks which soon fell to their lot; the knot and instruments of torture were always near, and woe to him who fell under the chief's displeasure!

Days and weeks wore wearily by, and some of the men began to question amongst themselves if it would not be better to end all their difficulties and sorrows by one desperate act when a new hope was given them.

One night as Ronald lay half-asleep, half-waking in his hut, he heard the curtain of rushes softly lifted, and saw standing in the light of the brilliant moon a young and slender shape.

It was not unfamiliar. The beautiful, dusky face bent upon him had often looked kindly at him as he passed to his heavy labours, and the soft dark eyes, with their deer-like expression, were often turned upon him with something more than compassion in their deep depths.

"Hush!" said the girl, placing her finger on her lips. "Hush! it is not safe to speak aloud. Oh! white man, I have seen your sorrow and your sickness; as you love your land and people, so I love mine, and in your desolation and longing all my heart is with you."

"I will help you—I—even I—Wenonda's daughter. Listen, oh man of the white face. To-morrow my father holds high feast, for Gero has given him a son where his other wives gave but daughters."

"So, when the dusk falls, the dance and the chant go up in thanks to the Great Being who has showered blessings on us and our land, all the huts will be left unguarded, the kraal will be deserted, for all must keep the feast."

"Then will I steal back and set you free, you and yours; and when you are happy in your own land, among your own people, do not quite forget poor Donora," and without another word she turned and left him full of new hope, new courage, and a deep pity for this beautiful young savage who loved him so unselfishly.

That night when the drums and cymbals announced the beginning of the feast, Ronald

stood ready, waiting for his deliverance to come. Trembling and sick with the excitement of the hour, it seemed to him there, in that African wild, that he caught the fresh breath of English air, and heard the songing of the trees, as he had heard it many and many a time before in the days long gone by.

With every nerve strained to its highest tension he stood within the hut and heard the shouts and yells of the Africans, the songs in which they chanted Wenonda's praise and told of his prowess.

He caught the lurid glare of the flaming fires, although, indeed, they were lit at some considerable distance from the kraal; and then the curtain was gently raised and Donora stood before him.

"My master," she said, "the hour has come, be watchful and silent; all your men are ready; follow Donora," and as she spoke she thrust his own rifle and ammunition, (long since confiscated), into his hands.

Without a word he stepped out into the open, and lightly as a fawn followed the girl's graceful, gliding figure.

One by one his old companions, wasted, worn, and changed as himself, joined him noiselessly, and so, under cover of the woods, they stole away, Donora leading.

"Let me go with you, my master," she had pleaded. "If Donora stays behind, her own people will sacrifice her to the great gods."

And although Ronald wondered within himself what he should do with the young barbarian when once he reached civilised parts, he could not say her nay.

The little band walked swiftly and as noiselessly as the fallen twigs and branches would allow, and always the glimmering white-robed figure of the maiden went before.

But all at once, from the distance, came faint yells of rage and disappointment, mingled with the dull beat of the drums, the hoarse braying of the native trumpets. Donora turned and caught Ronald's hand.

"Fly, my master! they will be on us soon! Leave Donora behind; her work is done, and her life may save yours!"

"If you go back, Donora, what will happen to you?"

"I shall be torn to pieces," she answered, with scarcely a tremor in her voice.

"Then I will never leave you. Cling to me, child; we will weather this storm yet, I hope. Oh, that there were some hiding place!"

"There is," she answered, "a cave amongst the mountains known to me and me alone. Donora discovered it long ago, and kept her own secret, not knowing why. Hurry, hurry, my master! Hark! how they gain upon us! Oh! if you love your life, run, run, run!"

He held her hand fast, and hurried her along with greatest rapidity, whilst his little company followed closely, closely.

Nearer and nearer came the foe, louder and louder grew the battle yells, and suddenly Donora snatched her hand from Ronald's hold, and before he could stay her rushed to the rear.

It was madness to return for her, but Ronald could not leave her behind. Bidding his men go forward, he hurried towards the girl, only in time to see her fall prone, with a dreadful arrow in her breast.

She smiled up at him as he bent over her, but urged him to fly.

"Only with you," he said, and caught her in his arms. "Donora, dear Donora, tell me where is this place of refuge."

"Put me down," she said. "Leave me here and save yourself!"

"Without your help I cannot!" he answered, appealing to her love for him in the vain hope of saving her. "Child, there is no time to lose!"

"Then carry me quickly. Once out of the wood turn to the right—and—and them—I will show you."

How faint her young voice was! How feebly her heart beat under his hand! In an agony of fear lest she should die, Ronald hurried on. She was lithe and small, but to

a man in his wasted condition the task of carrying her was no light one. But with the indomitable pluck of a true born Englishman he held on his way, until Donora said,—

"Stop! put me down! Get your men together. Here, behind these thickets, we may hide until the braves have passed. In the morning we will go on—"

"Is it safe?" Ronald asked, anxiously.

"Yes. If we go further they will track us by the marks of blood we leave behind. They will search for them early, for their arrows are sure, and death comes soon to those they strike."

"Oh! Donora!" in a tone of keenest pity. But she made a gesture enjoining silence; and then the little company lay silent and hidden in the thicket until Wenonda and his soldiers rushed by.

Afraid to move, afraid to speak, they crouched together until returning steps warned them once again how near their peril was. Then one man flung his coat about Donora that the glimmer of her white garments should not bring about detection. And when the echo of their steps grew fainter, fainter yet, Donora said,—

"Now, let us go. Early in the morning they will seek us."

So having stanchied the bleeding, Ronald lifted her once more, and, obeying her directions, they soon found themselves in a wonderful cave, hidden from view by tremendous masses of stone. There the men spread out such scanty clothing as they could spare, and so made a comfortable couch for Donora. It was easy to see that she was dying fast. Ronald sat by her, holding her cold hand in his, speaking gently now and again to her.

"Are you all saved?" she asked once, turning her dying eyes upon the man she loved so well.

"Not all, Donora. We have left five or six upon the way, wounded by your braves. Tomorrow we will seek for them."

"It will be useless. Long before the new sun rises the white men will be dead—even as I. Not an arrow but carries with it death—all are poisoned. Master! master! I am glad to die serving you and yours!"

He bowed his head and burst into tears—she was such a child, and she was dying for him—dying with a smile on her poor lips, a great light in her dark eyes, and he felt as though he had murdered her.

Wasted by famine and sickness, that little band of gallant men fought their way over desert and mountain; burying one here, another there, until but half their original number survived.

Feeble and fainting, ragged and bronzed, they crawled one day into Kimberley, there to find kind hearts and hands to give them cordial welcome.

How good it was to hear the old familiar tongue, to look once more upon the faces of white men. Toil and hunger, grief and pain alike were forgotten in that blissful hour.

Smiling, yet tearful women, bade them welcome, strong men grasped their hands and uttered awkward, honest words of friendship—not half so cordial as the acts that followed. And all began to look forward to that return journey which should reunite them with wives and families, with dear ones parted from them, but never forgotten.

Ronald had no one to bid him welcome, so he said, but he changed his tune one fine morning when, on taking up an old paper, he read the announcement of Arthur's death.

"Poor old boy!" he said, aloud, "poor old boy! And she has been a widow nearly two years. I will go home."

And the next week saw him embark on the *Arizona*, bound for England and Mary.

"I shall reach her in time for Christmas," he thought. "I wonder how she will greet me?"

After a long, but prosperous voyage, he reached the "tight little island," and going

straight to his solicitor's, learned that young Mrs. Verral was staying at the Manor with Mrs. Verral, senior. So to Childesthorpe he went.

Mary sat alone in the old familiar library, her thoughts busy with the past; how strange it was that she, who had once been the slighted and despised governess, the forlorn little drudge, should now be the most honoured guest, the most dearly loved daughter and sister; Mrs. Verral's *confidante*, the guide and confessor of Minnie and Dot—the dearest of all to little Dot—Arthur's pet and plaything.

Presently the child entered, a great bough of mistletoe in her hand.

"Mary, dear, I want you to hang this just under this middle beam! Minnie says it is vulgar—is it?"

"No, child, no! These old customs keep our hearts young. Dot, Dot, what a bright face you have, and how your eyes shine!"

"That is because Mr. Cassilis has been kissing me and romping with me," answered the child. "Oh, sister Mary! how I wish your father was my father too! You know, I cannot remember papa!"

"Poor little mite."

"Oh, listen, Mary, dear! What a hubbub! Who can it be? I'm sure mamma did not expect visitors. I'll run away and see who it is, and then hurry back with the news; good-bye, you lovely, kind old Mary!"

Who was this standing in the dim doorway? Stretching out eager hands to the dark figure by the fire? Who was this so haggard and tremulous, who spoke one word so uncertainly, yet so lovingly, so tenderly, that Mary's heart leaped up in her breast, and although she tried to speak, no word would come? What matter? He was beside her now, under the centre beam; he had caught her in his arms and kissed the sweet mouth, the dainty cheek and fair brow before she could say him nay. Who was it who fell then at her feet, as though he would kiss the hem of her garment, and dared not speak lest haply he should disgrace his manhood.

"Ronald!" she cried. "Ronald! oh love, love, love! how I have hoped for this hour—how I have feared never to see it. Why have you been so long silent?"

"All that I will tell you to-morrow. Mary, darling, are you happy at last? Sweetheart, I came as quickly as I could; and now, if indeed you mean to bless me with your love, wish me a 'Happy Christmas and a glad New Year.'"

"A Happy Christmas," she faltered, bending her face upon his, and a voice outside echoed her words; she turned swiftly.

"Father, dear father, thank you for that wish!"

She was clasped close and fast to her father's heart; and as he turned his face upon the young man, he said,—

"You have won a treasure; be good to her. Heaven knows she has suffered enough."

"As I deal by her may Heaven deal by me!" and at that Ronald kissed the sweet face no not of his would ever shadow! And so all clouds passed away.

[THE END.]

PALE or lead-coloured nails indicate melancholy people.

Broad nails indicate a gentle, timid and bashful nature.

Lovers of knowledge and liberal sentiment have round nails.

People with narrow nails are ambitious and quarrelsome.

Small nails indicate littleness of mind, obstinacy and conceit.

Choleric, martial men, delighting in war, have red and spotted nails.

Nails growing into the flesh at the points or sides indicate luxurious tastes.

## TRIED AND TRUE.

—o—

As the wind hauled fair for Cuba, fold after fold of canvas was loosened and sheeted home, spreading broad and full from truck to deck, until the stately ship bore the appearance of some enormous white cloud sweeping over the bosom of the ocean.

About her curved prow, roaring through the water, the bright sunshine wove myriad rain-bows in the leaping spray, and lighted up like silver spangles the gauzy wings of hundreds of flying-fish darting through the air around the vessel.

Aft, at the helm, with her husband, stood the captain's pretty wife, Emily, a young woman of twenty-five, with brown eyes and smooth chestnut hair. The captain, a sturdy young fellow of thirty, was teaching her to steer.

At her playful request he often showed her how to thus guide the craft, so that she was now become quite skilful in the handling of the wheel.

"Ay," he was saying in reply to a remark she made, "you steer so well that, if all the *Sea Nymph's* men were sick, I could safely put you at the helm."

"Are you not then fortunate in having brought me to sea with you?" inquired Emily, laughing. "I love the sea, and am glad to find myself so useful."

"So far," he answered, "you have seen only the *bright side*. Suffering or danger would make you wish you had stayed at home."

And, as he spoke, he looked down at her white, slender throat and frail, sylph-like form.

She became serious and thoughtful.

"It is true I am not very strong," she said, and then, with a slight shudder, she added: "I hope we will have no hardship or peril of any kind. It is bad enough to have to hold on to the side of one's berth to keep from falling out, when the ship is rolling, without meeting with any worse danger!"

She said this pleasantly; but, although he did not show it, her remark gave her partner some inward dissatisfaction.

"Surely," he thought, "this is not like the speech of the model sort of woman we often read about, who would say, 'I will brave any hardship for the sake of being with my husband!' I wish she had said that to me, instead of what she did. I fear my pretty wife is a fair-weather craft, whom trouble or danger might drive from my side; but, then, after all, I must remember she is delicate, and has had but few trials."

On that very day a merchant barque, called the *Pole Star*, from Rio Janeiro for London, was spoken, and her captain coming aboard informed Hugh that he was chased by pirates three days before, off the coast of Cuba; for at this period, (1820), the shores and waters of the West India Islands were infested with swarms of freebooters, who often attacked and plundered passing vessels.

"Oh, Hugh!" cried Emily, pale with alarm, "now that we are *sure* there are pirates near us I feel very much afraid. Let us put off going to Cuba for the present. We can go to the Bermudas and wait until the sloop-of-war there, which you said was going to cruise off the West Indies, is ready to sail."

"No, she has probably sailed before now. Besides, the owners of this ship want their cargo at a certain time, and as I promised, if possible, to bring it to them at that time, I must not break my word. Of course, the risk from pirates or shipwreck was understood, but that was not to keep me back. After all, we may see no sign of a pirate," he added soothingly; then, deeply touched by the look of terror on the face of his gentle wife, he continued: "I think it best you should not be exposed to any risk. Here is the barque *Pole Star* home bound for London. I will transfer you aboard of her, if you will go."



"No," she promptly answered. "I will stay with you."

Her husband could not persuade her to leave him, and soon, the skipper of the *Pole Star* having departed, the *Sea Nymph* was kept on her course.

Hugh was sorry his wife had not taken a home passage aboard the other craft. Her refusal, he believed, was owing to her having concluded that there would, after all, be no danger. Should pirates really be encountered, he dreaded the effect upon the delicate nerves of his fair consort, who, he feared, might lose her reason, or even expire from sheer terror.

Sure enough, three days later, the rays of the rising sun partly dispersing a mist that hung over the sea, showed four low, suspicious schooners, with black hulls, and with bows as sharp as sword-fish, swiftly cleaving the golden-yellow waves, under clouds of canvas, towards the *Sea Nymph*. One of these vessels was really ahead, another astern, and the two others were coming up from windward and leeward, the first mentioned and the latter being, of course, "close-hauled." They were still about three miles off, and by crowding additional canvas Hugh hoped he might manage to escape. In fact, he had nearly passed the one off the lee bow, when bang! went a gun, and a shot crashed against the fore-topmast aloft. Slowly and gracefully the spar, with its broad canvas attached, inclined to leeward, and then away it went rattling down by the run alongside.

"Hi-yah! hi-yah! Hooray!" yelled the pirates, as their sharp-prowed craft came on, cutting the water like a knife.

Out on the booms and in the rigging they swarmed, with caps pushed back from their dusky faces, the long daggers and pistols in their sashes plainly revealed.

"We will at least make a good fight before they take us," said Hugh to his crew, consisting of fifteen sailors. "Out with the guns!"

These, three in number, were run out, and fired again and again, but without much effect, while so thick and fast were the shot from the pirate craft, as the four vessels came on to hem in the crippled *Sea Nymph*, that several of Hugh's men soon were killed.

Meanwhile nothing could exceed the captain's surprise at the conduct of his wife, now that the expected peril was really come.

Instead of dropping from terror, as he had thought she would do, Emily, although very pale, was resolute and composed.

Hugh had requested her to stay in the cabin, but she had bravely ventured up to the companion-way, from which she watched her husband, who, with sleeves rolled up and face begrimed with powder, was assisting his few men to work the guns.

The fog, which, as stated, had partly cleared, was again thickening, so that finally only the booms and foremasts of the enemy could be seen. Now, however, they were not more than half a league off, and by some skillful shots Hugh succeeded in crippling two of them, by bringing down the fore-topmast yard of one and the fore-topmast of another.

But, even while he joined in the cheers of his little party, a spiteful shot struck him slantingly in the side, and he fell bleeding to the deck.

In a moment Emily was kneeling by him, giving him water.

"Take him into the cabin!" she then ordered in a clear voice.

He was carried there, and laid on a lounge, his wife carefully arranging a pillow under his head.

There was a good doctor aboard, and while he was dressing the wound Emily bathed the sufferer's forehead, and gave him cooling drinks.

"Would not he be more comfortable in his berth?" she inquired.

"He must not be moved at present," was the doctor's answer. "It would be his death to move him now."

Tears came to the young woman's eyes, her lips quivered.

"Don't worry, Emily," said Hugh, in a faint voice.

Knowing it distressed him to witness her grief, she wiped away her tears. Then she kissed him, and continued to bathe his head.

Above, the booming of guns and the howling of shot became every moment nearer and louder.

A minute later, nine men—all that were left of the young captain's crew—rushed into the cabin.

"It's all up with us," said one, lifting his cap. "The pirates'll soon be aboard of us; but the fog has thickened, so that we may escape in one of the boats. We can put the captain in the boat, ma'am," he added, addressing Emily.

"No; it would kill him to move him," spoke up the doctor. "But you had better go," he added, turning to the young wife.

"What I leave my husband?" she said.

"You can do him no good, for the pirates will not spare you. The rascals will show no quarter either to man or woman. All that can be done for him has been done, and—"

Ere the doctor could conclude, a shot came whizzing through the cabin window, severely wounding both of his legs above the knees.

"Come, ma'am, come!" cried the sailor who had previously spoken.

"I will not leave my husband," was Emily's answer.

Unable to persuade her to go, all the seamen except one, who declared he would not desert a craft that a woman "stuck to," made for the boat, assisting the groaning doctor into it, after which, screened by the smoke and fog, they pulled away from the imperilled ship.

The solitary sailor took his place at the wheel. Then he noticed that there was a slight change of wind, causing the nearest pirate to tack so as to "fetch" the *Sea Nymph*. Through the drapery of fog he could dimly see the vessel's foreyards swing round.

"Ma'am," he called at the companion way, "I think if I could brace the yards a little we might have just a chance of slipping off and showing our heels to them human sharks; but it needs some one at the wheel while I do the bracing, for the wind has freshened."

"I will take the wheel," answered Emily, quickly, "and try to save my husband."

She ran on deck, and the sailor having shown her the course to steer, she seized the wheel. Then the tar hurried to brace the yards, for the shots were now coming very fast, and he was anxious to relieve Emily from her perilous position as soon as possible. A few vigorous pulls on the lee braces brought the yards to the required slant; but as the man was about to take the wheel again, a heavy splinter, knocked from the rail by a shot, struck him on the temple, laying him dead at the young wife's feet.

"Now, Heaven help me," cried the brave woman, "to steer aright, and save my noble Hugh!"

With firm hands she worked the helm; with steady eyes she watched the ship's head, to see that it did not swerve; and as the craft went roaring on through the white foam toward the space between the pirate vessels by means of which she hoped to escape her enemies, a gleam of joy lighted her face.

A fine type of womanly courage and fortitude was she, standing there with her beautiful chestnut tresses blown out from her head like streamers, and not a tremor shaking her slender figure, although the shot whizzed and whirled and screamed all about her, some of them even grazing her hair.

In that moment she heeded not the flying shot—thought nothing of her own peril; but her eyes were brighter than the flashing death-gleams that lighted the fog all around her, for every thought, with the whole strength of her soul, was concentrated on that one idea—that one unshaken resolution to save the life of her wounded husband.

On went the ship, and at last she passed

through the open space between the pirate vessels, thus leaving the latter in pursuit astern.

Two of them, as stated, were crippled, but the others gained on the *Sea Nymph*, until, by keeping off a little, Emily managed to maintain her distance from them.

Thus pursuers and pursued had proceeded a league, when all at once the young woman beheld a dark object—some kind of craft—aboard of her.

Her heart sank. Was it possible that one of the pirate vessels had contrived to double on her in the fog?

A moment later she saw the lofty masts of the vessel looming up; then she saw open port-holes—a double row—with the muzzles of the guns showing through them, and she beheld a marine, with musket at support, walking the gangway!

A cry of joy escaped her, for the vessel was a man-of-war, and her husband was saved!

"Please to put your wheel hard down!" sang out an officer from the vessel's quarter-deck; and Emily promptly did as requested.

The ship swung up into the wind, and a cutter, containing a surgeon and a crew, with the seamen who had deserted the *Sea Nymph*, and were afterwards picked up by this sloop-of-war, came alongside. Emily was relieved at the wheel, and the surgeon accompanied her into the cabin.

Hugh feebly raised his head.

"We are not captured, then?" he said to his wife.

"No. I have saved you!" she answered. "I steered away from the pirates, and now we are close to the man-of-war. I learn it is the same one you spoke of, which was lately at the Bermudas."

The war-craft now chased the pirates, but the latter contrived to escape in the fog. Meanwhile the crew which had been sent to the *Sea Nymph* proceeded to repair her damaged foremast, and she was soon in proper condition to keep up with the sloop-of-war, which was headed for the port of Havana, Cuba, where both vessels arrived a week later.

Under the surgeon's skilful treatment and that of the captain's wife the young man, in a fortnight, was able to leave the cabin, after which he shipped a new crew, procured his cargo, and eventually took it home.

The brave conduct of his wife, whose character he had so misjudged, strengthened his love and esteem for her, and he now knew that a woman who shudders at the very thought of peril may show the utmost courage and fortitude when that peril really confronts her.

Not only had the noble behaviour of his fair partner saved her husband's life, but it also influenced the shipping firm, grateful for the preservation of their vessel—to allow Hugh a more liberal share of profits, thus enabling him, in a few years, to purchase the *Sea Nymph*, the name of which, in honour of his wife, he changed to the *Emily*.

BALDNESS is stated to be spread through the agency of barbers, and the employment by several persons of one comb in common.

In New Granada grows a plant which is locally known as the "ink plant," and scientifically as *varitaria thymifolia*. Its juice serves, without the slightest preparation, as ink. At first the writing appears red, but in a few hours it assumes a deep black hue. It is worthy of note that steel pens are entirely unharmed by this fluid, which is free from the corrosive properties of ordinary ink. Several sheets of manuscript, written with this natural ink, became soaked with sea-water on their journey to Europe, but, when dried, the writing was found to be still perfectly clear.

## FACETIÆ.

THE boy who was bent on eating a green watermelon was in the same condition after he had eaten it.

PROUD MOTHER: "O, John, the baby can walk!" ORNEL FATHER: "Good! He can walk the floor with himself at night, then."

"WHAT'VE you got?" "Cook pheasant!" "Nonsense, man! It's a rabbit." "Well, p'raps it is—anyhow I knoo I'd it something!"

WAGG, (to Bowser, who has his finger done up in a rag): "Hello! How did you do that?" BOWSER: "Trying to hammer a nail." WAGG: "You succeeded, didn't you?"

THERE are two times when a man thinks a woman's hat is too high. One is when it is in front of him at the play, and the other is when it is his wife's and he has to pay for it.

HOSTESS: "Won't you sing something, Mr. Greene?" Mr. Greene: "There are so many strangers here I— Hostess: "Never mind them; they'll be gone before you get half through."

JONES: "What did your wife say when you got home last night?" SMITH: "What did she say?" "My dear fellow, it would take me three hours to tell you half of what she said."

WIFE, (at church): "That man in the second pew is acting very strangely. Do you think he is crazy?" HUSBAND: "I wouldn't be at all surprised, my dear; I see his collar button has gone down his back."

"AW! Miss Eastman, I don't catch the idea. Et—what are you trying to paint?" "I'm trying to paint a calf in the foreground here. But a model is necessary, I fear. Would you mind posing, Mr. Dryplate?"

DOG FANCIES: "Yes, madam, I have all kinds of dogs here. Is there any particular breed you wish?" OLD LADY, (who reads the papers): "Oh, anything—that's fashionable. Lemme see—an ocean greyhound."

"CAN't you stay a little while longer?" asked the criminal, as his kind friend was about to leave. "No, Bob, I haven't time to-day." "Well," said Bob, "take some of mine. I've got ten years more than I want here."

MRS. GOLDSCHMIDT: "Oh, Isaac, come quick. Liddle Schakob has swallowed a pin." MR. GOLDSCHMIDT: "Oh, vell; pins vos cheap." "But dis vos ein tiament-pin." "Py grassins! Vy don't you say so. Run fer dot doctor, quick!"

SMITHERS: "Why weren't you at the ball last night?" DASHAWAY: "Didn't have a dress suit." SMITHERS: "Why, I saw you in one the other evening." DASHAWAY, (sadly): "That was my brother's. He got home first yesterday afternoon."

FIRST THUMP: "Now then, pard, divide fair." SECOND ditto: "Sartinly, Mike, I ain't had nothin' to eat since Friday, an' you ain't had no sleep for four nights. I'll take the hen, an' you take the feathers, 'n go to that air barn 'n enjoy yourself."

A LADY took her little daughter out to tea, and was much shocked to see her try to put a thin piece of bread-and-butter into her pocket. MOTHER: "Whatever are you doing?" LITTLE GIRL, (dive): "I thought I would take this piece home to nurse for a pattern."

"DON'T sleep with your mouth open," said Fred to his younger brother. "You should breathe through your nose." "But I don't know when my mouth's open. What do you do when you wake up and find your mouth open?" "What do I do? Why, I get up and shut it."

A PROFESSOR, in concluding a lecture on some Oriental language delivered to a single hearer, remarked: "Were I not afraid of trespassing too long upon your time—" "Oh! that doesn't matter. I am engaged by the hour \* \* \*." "How is that. By the hour?" "Certainly, I am your cabman."

"FORCE, gentlemen," said the Professor, "and power are not always found in large bodies. Sometimes the smallest things will be more powerful than great ones. Can any of you give me an illustration?" "The nose of trumps, sir," replied the wicked student.

A NEW bell-boy at one of our hotels recently conducted a gentleman to his room, and, on leaving, received orders to awaken him at six o'clock. "Yis, sar," said he; "ye see that knob there? Well, just press that when ye want to get up, and I'll come up and wake ye."

MAGISTRATE (to prisoner): "You say, Uncle Rastus, that you took the ham because you are out of work, and your family are starving. And yet I understand you have four dogs about the house." Uncle Rastus: "Yes, sar; but I wouldn't ask my family to eat dogs, yo' honuh!"

MAMMA (their last unmarried daughter having just accepted an offer): "Well, George, now the girls are all happily settled, I think we may consider ourselves fortunate, and that marriage isn't—" PAPA (a pessimist): "Um—don't know! Four families to keep 'stead of one!"

POLITICAL ECONOMIST: "The way to cure this trust trouble is for every one to stop using all articles monopolized by the trusts." FRIEND: "I knew a man who tried that." "Noble fellow; where is he?" "First he was arrested for not being sufficiently clothed, and then he starved to death."

EDITH: "I promised to marry Fred last night." ELLA: "It was only last week that you told me that you really hated him." Edith: "So I did; and I meant it, too." ELLA: "Then you have changed your mind. What caused you to do so?" Edith: "No, I have not changed my mind; but, you see, Fred used to be a life insurance solicitor, and so he would not take 'no' for an answer."

RURAL MINISTER: "None of the brothers whose duty it is to pass the plate are here to-day. Would you object to taking up the collection?" MODEST WORSHIPPER: "I never passed the plate in church in my life, and I'm afraid I'd be rather awkward." "Oh, never mind about that. It won't be noticed. Most of my congregation become absorbed in their hymn-books about the time the plate goes 'round.'"

OLD GENT: "And so that is your employer going to the funeral of one of his clerks?" YOUNG CLERK: "Not a clerk, but a distant relative of one of the clerks." "My! my! I'm sure that is very thoughtful." "Yes, most too thoughtful. Whenever any of us loses a relative and tells him about it, he always goes to the funeral, concern him!" "En? And do you object to such kindness of heart?" "Tian's kindness of heart, sir. He goes to make sure that the funeral isn't an excuse for a day off."

NEW BOARDER (shivering): "Don't you think it is nearly time to start the fires, Mrs. Slimdick? I know coal is rather high, but—" MRS. SLIMDICK: "Yes, I will have them started as soon as the flies are all dead. You see, if the flies are started too soon it keeps the pesky flies alive all winter." NEW BOARDER: "Oh! I hadn't thought of that." MRS. SLIMDICK (a little later, in the kitchen): "Bridget, the parlour has some flies in it, so cold they can hardly crawl. Bring 'em in here and warm 'em up a bit."

WHEN a father in Madagascar gets the notion that his daughter ought to marry he puts a rope around her neck, and leads her forth; and the first young man he offers her to has got to take her or pay a forfeit. The father thus saves the expense of light and fuel incident to two years' courtship; and the young man also saves on opera tickets and ice cream. But the spectacle of young men darting up alleys and climbing over back fences, when a father starts out leading his daughter with a rope around her neck, must be a very common one in Madagascar.

"AT home Tuesdays in March from three until six o'clock," read a simple-minded old lady on the wedding cards of a young couple of her acquaintance. "Well, well," she said, deprecatingly, "Carrie was always an awful girl to go, but I did think she'd stop her pading round and settle down after she married; but this looks like she expected to go it worse than ever when she has to send out notice that she won't be at home but three hours a week. Great housekeeping she'll do at that rate! I pity her husband!"

"Six, grandpa," said his fourteen-year-old grandson, "you are eighty years old, and still as lively as a cricket. I'd pose when you were a young man you took good care of your health—went to bed with the chickens and got up with the lark. 'Early to bed and early to rise' was your motto?" "No, my boy," said grandpa. "I didn't follow that maxim. I went to bed at 4 A.M., and didn't get up until noon." "Gracious! you must have been a wild one, grandpa!" "No. I was night editor on a morning paper."

SOME of the people who get to Europe and take the name of the United States in vain are eminently calculated to set old shivers running up and down the spines of the effete monarchies they walk over. A Washington gentleman tells of one he encountered traveling on a Cook's tourist ticket. Strangely enough she was from Massachusetts. Standing in front of a masterpiece of art in a Florentine gallery, she convulsed her hearers by exclaiming: "Oh, my! wouldn't that look lovely in woodcut!" She travelled forty miles to see the famous "Blue Grotto," and then didn't see it because there was a small fee charged. While sight-seeing at the Paris Exhibition she yawned heavily and remarked: "I do hope we will get home in time for the Ta'nton cattle show!"

"MY mother gets me up, builds the fire, gets my breakfast, and sends me off," said a bright youth. "What then?" said the reporter. "Then she gets my father up, and gets his breakfast, and sends him off; then gets the other children their breakfast, and sends them to school; and then she and the baby have their breakfast." "How old is the baby?" "Oh, she is 'most three, but she can walk and talk as well as any of us." "Are you well paid?" "I get eight shillings a week; father gets eight shillings a day." "How much does your mother get?" "With a bewildered look the boy said: "Mother! why she don't work for anybody." "I thought you said she worked for all of you." "Oh, yes, for all of us she does; but there ain't no money in it."

HE was a small boy and appeared to have an active brain. He sat on a Woodward Avenue Street-car and toyed with a little square box that resembled one of those cameras that are liable to take your picture when you least expect it. A large, pompous man got on the car and took a seat next to small boy, whom he recognized as the son of a neighbour. Small boy adroitly leads the subject up to amateur photography. "Are you interested in photography, my little man?" benevolently inquired the pompous individual. "Oh, yes," was the reply, "I've done a good deal of it." "Well, could you take my picture?" "Yes, indeed, I could. Sit still and look pleasant and I'll take it." The other passengers in the car were now interested and watched the proceedings. The boy held the box in front of the big man, the latter regarding the operation with good-natured condescension. "That will do," said the boy. "Now, do you want to see it?" "Certainly." The small boy pushed back a slide in the box and held up to the gaze of all a drawing of a large and robust specimen of Darwinism. The passengers tittered, the pompous man was white with wrath, and the boy got off the car in company with a fiendish grin as he remarked to the big man: "When you want your picture taken again just let me know."



## SOCIETY.

It has given great satisfaction in Scotland to learn that the Prince of Wales has consented to open the Forth Bridge on March 4. His Royal Highness will, it is expected, be accompanied by the Duke of Edinburgh.

THERE has been a report circulated—some-what industriously—that the King of Greece intends to abdicate. Doubtless the rumour is worthless.

THE Emperor William II.'s hunting costume consists in the main of a double-breasted grey coat with green collar and lappels, grey pantaloons, high boots, and a soft grey hat.

THEY say, in America, that the very latest idea in artistic dressing is to wear in the morning a toilette *en suite* to match the fair one's hair, while in the evening the tint of the eye should dictate the colour of the dress.

THE habit of wearing stuffed birds as ornaments is again greatly on the increase; and even whilst admiring them in the form of decorations, one can but think with sorrow of the many little songsters thus slaughtered wholesale for our behoof, or, rather, for the behoof of fashion.

IT is possible the public may see at the next Royal Academy Exhibition the portrait of the Queen by the Princess Louise—an accomplished artist, worthy if only for that reason of having her works hung on the walls of Burlington House.

THE condition of the Empress of Austria is causing considerable anxiety amongst her friends here. There are many English people who know her, having met her at her frequent visits in the hunting season in Leicestershire and Ireland. Now she has fallen into a melancholy state, which has already had serious effects, and makes her shun the world.

IT is stated upon good authority that the daughters of the Prince of Wales, like their mother, have the cool hands that can make firm butter, which they have continually done in the Sandringham home farm, where the Princess of Wales has her pet Alderneys and all the dearest dairy furniture her heart can desire. The walls are tiled with exquisite peacock blue Indian tiles, the churn is silver, and the milk pans are also of that precious metal, lined with porcelain, while a tall milk jug painted to match the tiling by the Marchioness of Lorne is in constant use. Under the same roof with the dairy is a tea-room, with a cool, dull, green paper on the walls and a matted floor; it is furnished with light carved oak, and all the ornaments have been put up by the "house proud" princess herself. Here in fine weather come mother and daughters, make the butter they spread upon their bread, and have their tea often in the company of a few friends. All the princesses are very fond of animals, and of flowers, and take almost as much interest in the kitchen garden at Sandringham as in the flower beds.

THE Empress Frederick has recently arranged a salon in the Hohenzollern Museum, that famous collection of relics of German Royalty. One cabinet contains all the uniforms worn by the late Emperor Frederick, among them being that in which he was married and those worn as a boy. Another cabinet contains the bridal dress of white satin, wreath, shoes, handkerchief, and gloves, worn by the Empress Frederick at her wedding. Another interesting object is a candelabrum presented to His Majesty by Field-Marshal Wrangel, at the foot of which is the shell which nearly killed the then Crown Prince at the storming of Wuppel, during the Danish war. In another cabinet are all the orders of His Majesty and objects of his everyday use, such as whips, sticks, &c., among the latter being one with a carved head of his father, another out from a lime tree on the battlefield of Königgrätz, July 3, 1866.

## STATISTICS.

IT is said that there are over 600,000 regular opium-eaters in America. There are over 20,000 in Chicago alone.

THERE are annually killed in Africa a minimum of 65,000 elephants, yielding a production of a quantity of raw ivory, the selling price of which is some £850,000.

THE heart weighs 260 grammes in women and 330 grammes, (10½ ounces), in men; the average weight is 232 grammes. The period of its maximum weight is between 50 and 80. The amount of blood in the body is one-thirteenth the weight of the body, or five or six quarts, or eleven or twelve pounds.

THINK of the momentum of the sun, weighing as much as 330,000 earths, and dashing through space at the rate of a million miles a day! But there are a hundred million other suns visible in the heavens, each weighing at least as much as our sun, and all in motion, with a velocity in some cases far exceeding his.

## GEMS.

AMBITION thinks no face so beautiful as that which looks from under a crown.

AFFLICTION is the school of virtue; it corrects levity, and interrupts the confidence of sinning.

WE smile at the ignorance of the savage who cuts down the tree in order to reach the fruits; but the fact is that a blunder of this description is made by every person who is ever eager and impatient in the pursuit of pleasure.

IT is the close observation of little things which is the secret of success in business, in art, in science, and in every pursuit in life. Human knowledge is but an accumulation of small facts, made by successive generations of men, the little bits of knowledge and experience carefully treasured up by them growing at length into a mighty pyramid.

## HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

DAMP walls may be prepared for painting by brushing them with one pound of glue dissolved in one gallon of water, and thickened with red lead.

NOTHING is more soothing for burns or scalds than to pour the white of an egg over the injured place. It is easily procured, and is more cooling than sweet oil and cotton.

ROAST PARTRIDGE.—Pluck, draw and wipe dry, cut off the head, leaving sufficient skin on the neck to skewer back; rub with salt and pepper and sprinkle a little sage inside; bring the legs close to the breast, pass skewer through the thick part of the thighs; roast thirty minutes, baste with butter frequently, and serve with gravy and fried balls of dressing.

AMERICAN PLUM PUDDING.—One brick-lob soaked in two quarts of milk overnight. Add five crackers rolled fine, three eggs, three tablespoonfuls of butter, one teaspoonful of soda, one-half cup of molasses, one-half cup of sugar, two pounds of raisins, spice to taste. Steam six hours, then set in a warm oven half an hour. Sauce.—One cup of butter, two of sugar, two eggs, beat to a light cream, and then add a wine-glass of Madeira wine.

SWISS ROLL.—Mix together three ounces of castor sugar, three whole eggs, four ounces of sifted flour, a teaspoonful of tartaric acid, and the same quantity of bicarbonate of soda. Pour the mixture into a buttered baking tin which has a buttered paper on it, sprinkle with flour and sugar, mixed in equal quantities. Bake in a fairly quick oven for about fifteen minutes, then take it out and spread the jam, which should be warmed, over it. Then roll up.

## MISCELLANEOUS.

UNDER Queen Anne there was only a single daily newspaper in Great Britain.

IT is stated as a curious fact that during the recent great strike in London the almshouses were emptier than has ever been the case before.

THE head of the London Waiters' Union says that the tip system has developed to such an extent that in some restaurants the waiters pay five shillings a day for the privilege of waiting.

EMPEROR WILLIAM has suggested that every high school in Germany should be equipped with a phonograph as a sort of local mirror, in which the speakers can perceive their own vocal imperfections.

THE restorer's hand has not yet touched the venerable hall of "grand Gray's Inn" in which Queen Elizabeth danced, and where you still dine on the Armada tables she presented to the Society.

SILK thread, says *Sanitary News*, is soaked in acetate of lead to increase its weight, and persons who pass it through the mouth in threading needles, and then bite it off with the teeth, have suffered from lead poisoning.

WHILE we have been adopting the Australian ballot, the Australians have been introducing an American Institution—Arbor Day, to wit. In South Australia the first Friday in August has been selected as tree-planting day.

A NEW gem, the pierre Tonquinoise, is in the market. When cut like diamonds it is said to be very beautiful. Its colour is a dark blue, more brilliant than sapphire, though some varieties have a purple or red tinge.

THE Firth of Forth is now bridged, but it is not expected that trains will begin to run over the new route until March next, at the earliest. It is probable that the Forth Bridge will be formally opened by the Prince of Wales.

THE phenomenon, known as "Jack-with-a-Lantern" and "igneis fatuus," has terrified many a simple-minded rustic, whereas it is simply the phosphuretted hydrogen gas which rises from stagnant waters and marshy grounds. Its origin is believed to be in the decomposition of animal substances.

A Boston fireman has invented a simple contrivance to put out fires on the stage of theatres. It is a brass nozzle with three apertures, through which three fan-like streams of water are ejected to the height of seventy feet. The spray is so dense as to prevent a fire from passing through it.

AMONG the literary curiosities in the Southampton library is an old Bible known as the "Bug Bible," printed by John Daye, 1551, with a prologue by Tyndall. It derives its name from the peculiar rendering of the fifth verse in Psalm xci., which reads thus: "So that thou shalt not need to be afraid for any bugs by night."

A GOOD way to protect your watch is to have a button-hole made in the outer lapel of your watch pocket, and then pull your chain through that before fastening the bar of your chain in the centre button-hole of your vest. The light-fingered usually pull the watch up straight out of the pocket, but when the chain passes through the hole in the watch pocket, the pressure thus caused blocks their little game.

IT is stated that the annual expenditure on intoxicating drink is equal to £3 6s. 8d. per head of the whole population. This is more than is paid for the rent of every dwelling-house in the country; more than all the rates and taxes levied by local and imperial authorities amount to; twice as much as the rental value of all the land in the country; and twice as much as the value of all the coal and minerals raised in these islands.

## NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

**ANKHOUR.**—Florence, from the Italian, means unusual beauty; Constance, constant or true.

**B. B.**—New-street railway station, Birmingham, is the largest covered railway station in England.

**IONORAMUS.**—You cannot get a letter under three months from the time of your friend's departure.

**Q. Q.**—The Duke of Cambridge was engaged in the Battle of Inkerman, and had a horse shot under him.

**THEIRA.**—If a husband and wife are separated the husband is entitled to the custody of all the children.

**LOTTIE BOWEN.**—We cannot possibly tell you without some clue. There are hundreds of mixtures sold at the price you name.

**F. H.**—We know of no such "language," other than the history of nations, which may be gathered from its successive sorts of postage stamps.

**VERA.**—No young lady can tell a young gentleman that she loves him without being first addressed by him. It is the lady's place to wait to be wooed.

**CLERK.**—The writing of the letter is hardly a hand that would do for the Civil Service at present; but it might be made so by a very little steady practice.

**DOCK.**—The giver of an unstamped receipt is liable to a penalty of £10. The receiver incurs no penalty, but the receipt could not be produced in a court of law.

**FATHER.**—A boy who has passed the standard of exemption in vogue in that particular School Board district can work full time in a factory when he is thirteen.

**CONSTANT READER.**—Delicious sandwiches and cheap ones can be made by mincing fine, rare beefsteak. Season only with pepper and salt. These are excellent for invalids.

**ALPHA.**—1. The paper is a weekly one, price sixpence. It is registered for transmission abroad. 2. Dreams are common to everyone; healthy persons dream as well as those who are ailing.

**DICK.**—Fatalism implies a hopeless belief in fate, or an unchangeable destiny, to which everything is subject, uninfluenced by reason, and pre-established either by chance or the Creator.

**TERENCE.**—The island and coast waters of Japan furnish no less than ninety kinds of fish that are palatable to foreigners, and over two hundred and fifty varieties which the natives use for food.

**PETRONELLA.**—The old-fashioned style was Asmodeus, thus: As-mo-de-us. The new Italianized pronunciation is As-mo-day-ous. Both are right. It is really a question of the old or new school, that is all.

**BOE.**—January is named from Janus, the god of doors and gates, because the month opens the year. Some say that he is a two-faced god, and could look back on the last year and forward to the coming.

**B. S.—Taverns** may be traced to the thirteenth century. According to Spelman, in the reign of King Edward III. only three taverns were allowed in London. Taverns were licensed in England in 1752.

**C. R.**—We suppose that the reason an opera or a ballet does "not come home to the booms and business of men" as a tragedy or comedy does, is because men are not given to singing and dancing through life.

**GOSPOLINE.**—We are very much afraid that you cannot restore your bath without entirely repainting it; the rust has taken off the enamel, and nothing but a coat or two of enamel will restore it to its pristine beauty.

**NAM.**—1. "With thanks" is the right expression. 2. The writing appears to be disguised; as it shows in your letter, it would certainly not do for business. 3. You can be taken as an apprentice at the age you mention.

**OLD BOY.**—The Fleet was a famous prison in London, named from the creek, or stream, of the Fleet, upon the bank of which it was erected. After an existence of nearly eight centuries, it was abolished, and removed about 1845.

**C. C. C.**—Prolonged and critical measurements of the height of the aurora-borealis made in Denmark and Spitzbergen show that its elevation ranges from five to five hundred miles, the mean height being about one hundred and seventy-five miles.

**IN DOUBT.**—If the will leaves you all the property, it includes anything that may have come into the possession of the deceased since the will was made. It dates from the time of the death of the person who made it, not from the time when it was made.

**ALICE.**—1. It is so much better for girls not to keep up a correspondence with their gentlemen friends. No wise mother would like it. 2. That depends so much upon circumstances that it is not possible to give any strict rule; but, as a general rule, it is so much better not.

**INQUIRER.**—The sensation of going up in a balloon is very peculiar. The earth seems to be falling away. Of course it soon becomes impossible to detect movement on the earth's surface with the naked eye, but with the aid of a telescope this can be done. The fastest train seems to be going at a snail's pace, and a running horse seems to make very poor progress. Rivers look like little streaks of silver when the balloon is very high up. The steady fall in temperature is not unpleasant, and there is no feeling of giddiness whatever after a little practice.

**AMY.**—A marriage license holds good for three months, no longer. You do not say where yours was taken out. If at Doctors' Commons the cost is two pounds two shillings; in the country the fee is somewhat more. If you have been overcharged you can certainly recover the balance.

**RECRUIT.**—A soldier must salute his superior officer, whether the latter is in plain clothes or uniform; of course, it is possible that in the former case the officer may not be recognised, but the rules of the service are strict on the subject, and any man neglecting the salute is liable to punishment.

**ALMA.**—There is such a thing as a button sewing needle. It has a longitudinally reduced butt, slotted to form two members with hook-like extremities, whereby the cord or thread may be quickly and firmly secured to the needle, and a smooth, longitudinal surface be maintained from the shank to the point.

**H. F.—1.** There can be no marriage if the woman's husband is not dead, unless she has obtained a proper divorce; she will only be a mistress, not a wife. 2. Your father is not compelled to maintain you if you are able to work for yourself, nor is he obliged to support the child of any other person not his own.

**THE MARQUESS.**—It would, perhaps, be using rather too strong a term to say it is *wrong* to "nod your head to a particular friend at church, and on the other side of the room;" but such a salutation might, by some good people, be properly thought to be rather too secular a thing for such a place and such an occasion.

**T. ARBOT.**—The real name of the disease is "scrofula." It was formerly believed that a king's touch would cure it; hence the term, "King's evil." As late as the reign of Queen Anne people were publicly touched by the monarch for this complaint. It must have been very prevalent in bygone days. King Charles the Second touched over 92,000 persons during his reign.

## AT NIGHT.

At night, when work is done, 'mid shadows grey that darken  
And cling about the window where once the sun was bright,  
Sweet sounds come back again, to which we used to  
hearken,  
At night.

At night, though we are old, and the grey shadows  
cling  
Press to us that shore where there is no more light;  
Sometimes there come again sweet airs of childhood's  
singing  
At night.

At night we two may sit in shadow, open-hearted,  
Long since the time has passed when hope was all in  
sight!  
Softly we sing the songs of happy days departed  
At night.

At night the cricket's voice sounds through the shadows  
dreary;  
Our songs, alas! like his, have neither charm nor  
weight;  
We only rest and sing, hushed hopes and voices weary,  
At night.

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**PRETTY ALICE** has a sweet, thoughtful face, and seemingly very beautiful eyes; Jean is more sprightly-looking, with a charmingly piquant face. It is impossible to say what colours would suit either lady without seeing her; as a general rule, brunettes can wear bright, decided colours, while blondes look better in softer tints.

**POLLY.**—Your friends would be quite justified in asking the young man what his intentions are, as he has singled you out in such a manner. We should advise you to be very careful in your dealings with him, and certainly not allow any such familiarities as kisses unless he comes to an understanding with you and you are engaged to him.

**PRINCE EDDY.**—The Field of the Cloth of Gold is a celebrated plain near the town of Ardres, in northern France. It is known by this name in consequence of the meeting on this spot in 1520 between Henry VIII. of England and Francis I. of France, with their retinues, and the cloth of gold with which the tents of the two sovereigns were covered.

**SALT WATER.**—The lists of articles kept constantly in life-boats vary in different vessels. Oars, oarlocks, rudders, boat hooks, ropes, canvas and casks of fresh water are always kept, and generally a small mast, which can be stepped in one of the forward thwart, is in each lifeboat. When there is time to make preparations before taking to the boats, certain articles are often added to the equipment, among which are blankets, tarpaulins, sea biscuit and food, fireworks (to serve in the night as signals of distress), spars, &c.

**FAITHFUL ANNIE.**—We should not advise you to follow the young man to Manitoba unless you are prepared to rough it and work hard until you have attained an independence. The life there is very rough, though food is plentiful; and any woman who does not mind turning her hand to whatever comes in her way to be done can lead a busy, healthy life, and be an assistant as well as a companion to her husband. If you go, put aside all notions of being a lady. A Canadian farmer's wife has to rear pigs and poultry, bake and cook, make and mend clothes, and now and then, when hands are short and need pressing, give a hand in many of the farm operations as well.

**SUNSHINE.**—1. Girls should never do anything without the consent and approval of their parents or guardians. 2. The writing seems to be that of a child. 3. Michael, from the Hebrew, means who is like God; Patrick, Latin, a nobleman.

**J. RICH.**—At one time it was generally believed that walnuts were an antidote to poison. It was also held that if water in which their outer husks were steeped was sprinkled on the ground it would cause worms to instantly come to the surface.

**ANNIE.**—We hardly understand what you want to know. If you have promised to go to America or anywhere else with a man of whom your parents disapprove you are acting very wickedly, and in all probability the fault would bring its own punishment along with it.

**TWO FOXES.**—Crowing hens have always been looked upon as unlucky. The country people in France have a rhyme to the effect that, "A crowing hen, a dancing priest, or a woman who speaks Latin, never comes to a good end." This is exemplified in the case of the hen at all events, for she is put to instant death on her first essay in the crowing line.

**A MOTHER.**—Castor oil is the best foundation for hair oil. It is used in preparing textile fabrics for dyeing; it is admirable for dressing tanned hides; it is an excellent lamp oil, superior to petroleum, and from it a very good gas can be distilled; it is very well adapted for lubricating fine machinery; and finally, when dissolved in alcohol, it makes a good varnish.

**FEMOUL BOY.**—Latin ceased to be spoken as the language of the people in Italy about 581. It was first taught in England in the seventeenth century, and speedily became the language of that kingdom, and the one in which English literature and law were expressed. Its use in law gave way to the common tongue about the year one thousand; was revived by Henry II., and again replaced by English by Henry III.

**EMILY.**—1. Nothing but constant attention will keep the nails; the white specks will grow out. 2. The lady has a pleasant though somewhat serious face. She is very earnest-looking, and has good features. 3. You write an exceptionally good hand. It is good enough for any business. 4. The question is a little vaguely put. There has been a statement in the papers lately that the negro races increase in numbers much faster than the whites.

**SURNAME.**—It was a custom among the ancient Irish, when the father died, for his son to take the name, lest it should be forgotten; hence the names Fitz-hubert, Fitz-gerald, derive their origin in compliance with this custom; the prefix *Fitz* being a Norman word, derived from the French *fils*, a son. It is also used in England of the illegitimate sons of kings and princes of the blood; as Fitzroy, the son of the king, Fitzclarence, the son of the Duke of Clarence.

**JESSE.**—You should always use plenty of friction to your skin to keep it active. Turkish baths might be of service to you; but you must not take them unless your heart is perfectly sound, and you are not subject to fainting fits. A Turkish bath should be taken very leisurely, and it is not well to go into the hottest rooms until you have had two or three baths. A wet towel should be placed round the head so as to keep it cool by evaporation, and thus prevent headache.

**XITELLA.**—The place you ask about is a town with good shops, and is very scodible and pleasant. At the same time, at certain times of the year it is quite empty, and, no doubt, extremely dull; but we do not think the place would suit you, as it is on clay, and houses are anything but plentiful, rates and taxes are high, and house rent is dear. You could not get such a flat as you require for the sum you name in any good part of London, and, indeed, we do not think you could find it anywhere.

**ANKHOUR BAKER.**—1. The letters you have written are meaningless as they stand, but we presume you have the word "Mispah" on your ring. It signifies actually a watch tower, and embodies the sentiment, "The Lord watch between thee and me." It has been much used of late for engagement and gift rings. 2. The wedding finger. 3. The grammar and spelling of your note are both correct; the writing leaves something to be desired, but a little steady practice will make it a very good hand.

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